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NTY YEARS AGO

EDMUND DOWNEY

Twenty Years Ago

By the Author of

"Twenty Years Ago."

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Brayhard
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Mr. Boyton
The Brass Ring

Twenty Years Ago

A BOOK OF ANECDOTE ILLUSTRATING
LITERARY LIFE IN LONDON . . . . .

BY

EDMUND DOWNEY

WITH SIXTEEN PORTRAIT SKETCHES

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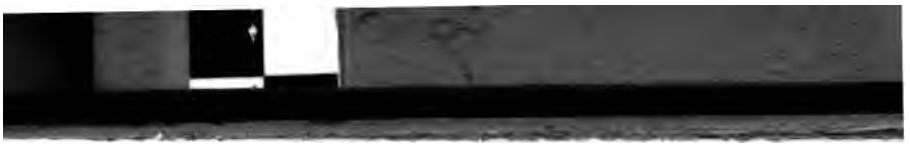

To

MRS. CASHEL HOEY

as a token of a friendship founded more than
Twenty Years Ago

PREFACE.

THIS is frankly a book of anecdote. It aims at illustrating a phase of literary life as I knew it at the close of the 'Seventies and during the first half of the 'Eighties. In 1879 I entered the publishing house of Tinsley Brothers, and I was busily employed at No. 8, Catherine Street, Strand, until the Autumn of 1884.

My memory of my Catherine Street days is vivid. At that time literary Bohemianism was decadent. The pulse still throbbed, but one could feel that the beat was failing. There were Ambrosial Nights—and days—but the banquets were fast becoming Barmecidal feasts. Bohemianism-in-the-Strand is now merely a memory. Not only are the times and the men changed, but the manners and the methods of the literary world of to-day are as different from those of the 'Seventies and the early 'Eighties as if a century had elapsed, or as if the periphery of the Strand had been shifted fifty degrees west.

Bohemia-in-the-Strand was a fascinating country,

and I was afforded many bright and amusing glimpses of the life of its latter-day denizens. There was no lack of tragedy—the memory of many of the tragedies often damps and depresses me—but in this little book I am dealing mainly with the lighter side of things.

EDMUND DOWNEY.

I am indebted to Mr. W. H. Combes for his kind permission to reproduce some portrait sketches by the late Alfred Bryan, and a portrait of Alfred Bryan, drawn by his friend, Thomas Downey.

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TWENTY YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM TINSLEY.

AN ODD INTRODUCTION.

My introduction to the publishing world came about in a peculiar way. In the autumn of 1879 I was contributing in a modest way, under the ægis of my cousin, Richard Dowling, to some weekly periodicals with which he was connected. One Saturday about mid-day, my cousin and I found ourselves at the bottom of Catherine Street, Strand. "I want to have a word with Tinsley," said he. "I'll be with you again in about ten minutes."

I remained in the neighbourhood of Catherine Street for about a quarter of an hour. There was a jeweller's shop at the

corner, and hard by, at the edge of the flagway, stood a post-pillar. I saw a loosely-moving man, attired in a black frock-coat of a somewhat unfashionable pattern, and wearing an Americanish "goatee," emerging from No. 8, Catherine Street. He lounged down the street and put some letters into the post-pillar. I turned round to gaze again at the window of the jeweller's shop. The stranger tapped me on the shoulder. Then he surveyed me critically from head to foot. "I beg your pardon," said he, "but might I ask if you are Dick Dowling's cousin?" I was somewhat confused at being accosted in this fashion by an utter stranger. I answered that I was Mr. Dowling's cousin. "My name is Tinsley," said my interrogator. "What the devil do you mean by standing at this corner? Come along with me." He then conducted me to No. 8, Catherine Street.

During the following week the head of the house of Tinsley Brothers asked Richard Dowling if he thought I would like to be attached to his office. On the next Monday morning I was established there; and my connection with William Tinsley was unbroken and unclouded for five full years.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

WILLIAM TINSLEY.

[*To face page* 3.

THE HEAD OF THE FIRM.

William Tinsley published his autobiography in 1900*. He was then in his seventieth year; his high spirits had evaporated and most things wore a drab look. Possibly, too, he was fearful of "letting himself go" or of saying many things which might be taken as an attempt to tread upon corns. At any rate, a perusal of his "Recollections" leaves one with an impression that he has been reading a record of publishing enterprises which were, for the most part, disappointments or utter failures. The note of failure is dominant, and it is not the true note. Neither is the picture of the man true; no one who knew him well would recognise the portrait he paints of himself.

I cannot plunge into my recollections of the Strand without giving a brief sketch of William Tinsley.

He commenced business as a publisher with some knowledge of the book-selling trade, but with no knowledge of the publishing trade, and with no capital. In a few years

* "Random Recollections of an Old Publisher." Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 2 vols.

he and his brother Edward were earning an income which ran into four figures. In the years which saw the publication of Miss Braddon's early novels I have been told on good authority that the profits of the partnership were between four and five thousand a year. Considering the nature of the business in which the brothers were engaged, their scant knowledge of the inwardness of publishing and their entire lack of capital and of commercial training, I think the good fortune of Tinsley Brothers was remarkable.

The rapid, and indeed, astonishing success of their enterprise engendered extravagant living—extravagant for men in their position and with their limitations--and when Edward Tinsley died suddenly in 1866, it was ascertained privately by William that the firm was about £4,000 to the bad.* The surviving member of the firm was confident that with the release of Edward's heavy drawings he would be able to pull the business round. But instead of setting his house in order, instead of seeking for capital and exercising judicious economy,

* This, I believe, was the view of affairs from the "upset" point: as a "going concern" it was pronounced to be solvent.

he blundered along unaided and with a lively contempt for the rainy days. His business continued to grow and to make money. He had no respect for account books. He kept his financial affairs mostly in his own head, and it is not to be wondered at that he did not improve his financial condition. Eventually he got mixed up, hopelessly and bewilderingly, with a group of publishing firms which was bolstering itself largely on bill-stamps.

The principal member of this kite-flying group came to smash one fine morning; another member was immediately pulled down, and after a short and heroic struggle, "Tinsley Brothers" toppled.

But all the time the business *per se* had been doing well, and when it was resuscitated it continued for many years to make money, though on a diminished scale.

William Tinsley does not need any certificate of character from me; but I may be pardoned for saying that, during the five years of my intimate association with him, I never knew him to do, or to suggest, a dishonourable act. He had a temper, and he held views about many things which were not other people's views.

But I repeat, he was an honourable man, and he was a kind-hearted man. He possessed a good deal of shrewdness and he was gifted with a remarkable ability for estimating the values, literary as well as commercial, of authors, especially of young or untried authors.

He enjoyed his life after his own fashion. He was very proud of being a publisher; and, perhaps, what he felt most was the shock to his pride, when he saw his business falling from him. Throughout almost the whole of his publishing career he devoted himself mainly to "the Library business," and, though, during the Sixties and the Seventies he published numerous successful books of travel and biography, the back-bone of "Tinsley Brothers" was the three-volume novel. The three-volume novel was killed early in the Nineties, so that in any event the house of Tinsley would hardly have survived the shock. The head of it would then have been too old to learn a new trade.

In an obituary which appeared in *The Daily News* of 3rd May, 1902, it is written: "In 1866, the sudden death of Edward Tinsley left the business in the charge of

William who had proved unequal to the task of sustaining it."

I hope I have shown that William Tinsley was well able to sustain the business. He conducted it personally and creditably for more than twenty years after his brother's death.

I am not aware if it has been stated previously in print that Edward Tinsley had decided, in 1866, to leave the firm of Tinsley Brothers and to join Virtue and Co. His reasons for arriving at the decision were that he saw Catherine Street was incapable of supporting, in its then style, his own house and the house of his brother. The brothers had differences of opinion, too, on questions as to the commercial values of certain authors. And Edward Tinsley believed that his chance of increased success in the future lay in the line of publishing books appealing directly to the million, rather than in the publishing of books intended mainly for the Circulating Libraries. Edward died suddenly at Catherine Street. In his hand was the pen and in front of him were the deeds which were to sever him from Tinsley Brothers and to make him a member of the firm of Virtue and Co.

Again, *The Daily News* writer says:—"The whole story is of peculiar interest. It may be told in brief now. William Tinsley was an honest man, but he was a publisher only by mere accident."

One might ask, "What is a publisher by deliberate design?" William Tinsley was only twenty-five or twenty-six years of age when he began to trade as a publisher. For some years previously he had served a sort of apprenticeship to the book trade as a dealer in second-hand books and in copies of new books sent to the newspapers for review. Surely there was some evidence of design in this! For nearly half a century he was in the book trade, mostly as a publisher. During that time he produced works—many of them "first books"—by George Meredith, Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, Wilkie Collins, Captain Burton, Rhoda Broughton, G. A. Sala, Harrison Ainsworth, William Black, Thomas Hardy, J. R. Planché, Mrs. Molesworth, Anthony Trollope, George Henty, Percy Fitzgerald, James Hannay, Mrs. Riddell, Ouida, Justin McCarthy, James Payn, Frank Buckland, Richard Jeffries, Mrs. Cashel Hoey, Sir W. H. Russell, Richard Dowling, Edmund

Yates, and numerous other well-known authors. And yet he is to be described as " a publisher only by mere accident." In the traffickings to which he mainly devoted himself—the Circulating Library business —he possessed a sort of instinct and an aptitude which, to my mind, marked him out as a publisher *not* by mere accident. Where he failed was in the commercial or financial trend. He was not a financier (or indeed a commercial man, in the City sense of the word) either by accident or design. He did not take into account that in the publishing world the financial part is of quite as much importance as the publisher (or literary or quasi-literary) part. He started at a time when there was a field for a Bohemian publisher, but this field did not remain open to the end of his career.

Mr. George Moore furnishes a caustic description—it is not devoid of exaggeration—of William Tinsley in his " Confessions of a Young Man." " This worthy man," writes Mr. Moore, " conducted his business as he dressed himself, sloppily; a dear, kind soul, quite witless and quite h-less. From long habit he would make

a feeble attempt to make a bargain, but he generally let himself in; he was, in a word, a literary stepping-stone. Hundreds had made use of him."

Mr. Tinsley did (as Mr. Moore describes it) "dress himself sloppily," and it is quite true he did "let himself in," very often in making bargains with authors; but that was an amiable fault; and did not his habit of making easy bargains (according to Mr. Moore himself) introduce to the reading public "A Modern Lover?" *

Mr. Moore's description of his earliest novel-publisher will perhaps make the following anecdotes of him more intelligible than if I furnished an elaborate sketch of the head of the firm as I viewed him. I will add, however, that he had an odd habit of referring to his acquaintances by their Christian names—generally abbreviated. William Tinsley was "Bill" to his intimates. I believe I am the only one

* Mr. Byron Webber was the chief advocate for Mr. George Moore's first novel. Tinsley Brothers had in their time many excellent literary advisers—one of them was Mr. John Morley—but William Tinsley occasionally accepted the verdict of some discriminating friend not attached to his staff. Webber was the most valued of these friends; it was he who "passed" Richard Dowling's first novel, "The Mystery of Killard," and George Moore's "Modern Lover."

of these whom he spoke of invariably by a surname, probably because, close as my association with. him was, I always called him "Mr. Tinsley."

I am, in the following disjointed anecdotes, endeavouring to give his words without any attempt to set the words down phonetically. It will be seen that his manner of speech *was* "sloppy," and that he was frequently a "literary stepping-stone"; but I think it will also be seen that he was very far from being "witless." I am well within the mark in stating that I knew him more intimately in his later period than any other man, dead or alive.

But now I must let William Tinsley speak as he spoke to me at odd moments at Catherine Street or in his cheerful house at Wood Green.

A BARGAIN WITH THE AUTHOR OF "GUY LIVINGSTONE."

"We had given some fancy prices in our time. My brother Ted was a rare flyer at this kind of game. When he took a fancy to an author he wouldn't stop at anything. But I was a bit of a flyer myself occasionally. I sprang thirteen hundred

pounds to Billy Russell for his 'Doctor Brady,' expecting that I was going to get another 'Charles O'Malley,' but it didn't come off. But I did worse than that. I gave E. S. Dallas six hundred* for editing 'Clarissa Harlowe,' which I published in three volumes. I wonder what old Sam Richardson would have said to this! And, mind you, reckless as this may seem, the spec. would have paid, only that Routledge got out a two-shilling edition, at the same time, of 'Clarissa,' and of course this knocked my three-volume venture out. But to go back to my brother Ted. We purchased the remainder of the copyrights of 'Guy Livingstone,' 'Sword and Gown,' and 'Barren Honour' from the Parkers when their business was broken up. We were determined to get hold of the author, Captain Lawrence. My brother believed in him to no end. Anyhow, we asked him to call about a new novel of his. We talked it over, and, of course, having his first books, we naturally expected him to throw in his lot with us. He was always desperately in want of money. No matter how much

* Mr. Tinsley states in print that the sum was four hundred pounds. I am certain he told me six. I never saw any document in the case.

he got he spent it faster than it came. Lawrence had his manuscript with him and it didn't take him long to see that Tinsley Brothers—especially Ted—meant to deal liberally with him. In the end Ted said: 'Look here, Captain. I'll tell you what I'll do. I hate bargaining. I'll give you a cheque for the copyright at my own valuation. It will be a long sight better, take my word for it, than your own, or anybody else's, valuation.'

"'All right,' said Lawrence.

"So Ted sat down and wrote out a cheque, and put it into an envelope and handed it to the Captain.

"'How much?' asked Lawrence.

"'Don't you ask any foolish questions,' said Ted. 'You can look at it when you are endorsing it. Come over to the Gaiety'—the old Gaiety bar—'and have a drink.' So over we went.

"The author of 'Guy Livingstone' was naturally anxious to see what he was getting for his manuscript. As a matter of fact, so was I. But Ted was in a larky humour and he tried to keep Lawrence from looking at the cheque; he wanted to give him a pleasant surprise when he got home. But

anyhow, Lawrence opened the envelope at the bar, and when he saw the amount he looked about as much surprised as if you had hit him with a hatchet. The cheque was for nine hundred pounds.* I can tell you it made me look pretty blue too. But it turned out a good bargain."

WILLIAM BLACK'S FIRST NOVELS.

"This is the story of Bill Black, so far as I and he were concerned about his novels. When Bill came to me first he was in a tea-house in the City, and he brought me the manuscript of a story of his, 'Love or Marriage.' I got it out in three volumes. I dropped a bit on it, but I thought there was something in the young fellow so I told him I'd try him again. Next time he did better, and, 'In Silk Attire,' brought us both in a trifle, just about enough to balance the loss on the first book. I showed Black everything, and he saw that I was doing my best for him, so he arranged to

* Mr. Tinsley states that a thousand pounds was the price his firm usually paid to Captain Lawrence for a new novel, but in talking to me about the first direct transaction with him he told me that the cheque was for nine hundred pounds. It may be that nine hundred pounds was all that was available at the moment, and that a further one hundred was paid later.

have a third try. This was 'The Monarch of Mincing Lane.' I ran it through the magazine,* but it did no good there nor when I brought it out later in three volumes. Bill was a bit upset, of course; so was I; but I wasn't afraid of him. 'Try again, William,' said I. So after a time Bill asked me to lunch with him at Simpson's; we could talk there over his next book.

"'I think I've done it this time, Tinsley,' said he. 'I have been closely studying the public taste. My 'Silk Attire' caught on because it appealed to the womenfolk. The pathetic heroine business, you know, with streaks of light stuff. Now the story I have just finished is all about this class of heroine—of course, with bits of humour, just to give the thing the proper effect.'

"'All right, my boy,' said I. 'Pass it along.'

"'Stop a bit!' said Black. 'What about terms? To be quite candid with you, Tinsley, I must have money—not a big lump, but something certain. I solemnly believe this will catch the public this time, so don't shut your purse-strings too tight.'

"I believed him. I felt sure he'd knock

* Tinsleys' Magazine.

'em, but I didn't like to have to be thinking about the loss on his third book.

"'Look here, William,' said I, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I want to be just as fair with you as you are with me. We're rowing in the same boat—don't make that joke in your mind, William, about the different sculls. I'll talk about terms to you if it's understood that we start fair.'

"'How do you mean?' said he.

"'Well,' said I, 'there's a balance of loss against the three books—nothing to hurt you very much, but enough to keep me thinking of it. In the bargain for the new novel, let it be agreed that this loss shall be taken into account and wiped out if number four succeeds.'

"'I'd see you damned first,' said Black.

"'Well, then,' said I, firing up, 'you can just take your book to hell with my compliments.' And there it ended.

"Just my luck! Number four was 'Kilmeny,' which he published anonymously. It did well, and he followed it up with 'A Daughter of Heth'; and when I saw Sampson Lows advertising sixteenth editions of his novels you may be sure I said some things not fit for publication."

"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY."

"Jim Rice was running *Once a Week* with Besant and they had a novel appearing in it, 'Ready-Money Mortiboy.' Rice came along to me and told me he wanted me to publish this story in three volumes. No risk to me, as he was going to print it and bind it on his own account and he could supply me with copies at so much a set. I was to advertise it and push it for all 'twas worth. Rice's price was pretty stiff and didn't leave much for the publisher. Still, as there was no risk in it I took 'Mortiboy' on. It did very well—for Rice and partner Besant. I didn't get much out of it except the credit of publishing it. However, I kept on at the game, publishing Besant and Rice's novels as the agents for Jimmy and his partner. Anyhow it came to 'Golden Butterfly.' It so happened that the very month the 'Butterfly' came out I had two novels which I had given big money for—seven-fifty down for one*—and naturally I was more anxious about my own property than about Jim Rice's. You

* I think this was a novel by Anthony Trollope—"The Golden Lion of Grandpere."

know now yourself that no one publisher can keep forcing more than two or three books at a time on the Libraries, and that even three are sometimes too many. I tell you I did my best fair and square for my own two books—tried to shove 'em everywhere for all I was worth and all they were worth, and let the 'Butterfly' shift for himself. But it was no use. When I'd go to Mr. Mudie on Monday morning looking for an order for my own two properties he'd say: 'Well, Tinsley, I'm afraid I can't do much for either of them, but you can send me another twenty-five—or fifty or a hundred as the case might be —of your 'Golden Butterfly.' *My* 'Golden Butterfly'! Same way with Will Faux at Smith's. He'd give me an order for the 'Butterfly' any time I called, but couldn't do much with my other two books. Same way up West. I began to curse the 'Golden Butterfly.' Here was everybody saying good things about it to me—congratulating me on *my* success with it—and all the time I was getting next to nothing out of it and Jim Rice and Besant were making money like slates. And it was standing in the way of the books I owned. And didn't Rice,

who knew all about the game, enjoy the fun! 'Bravo, Bill!' he'd say, 'You're making your fortune out of the G. B. See what a thing it is to be able to spot a winner. No risk—all profits.' In the end I had to make up my mind that publishing for Master Rice might be a very fine game for him and partner, but it wasn't of much value to me, so I declined to continue working for them on the old terms. People will tell you now that Jim Rice gave me the cold shoulder, but see for yourself."

Here Mr. Tinsley stood up, mounted a chair, and fumbled in a pigeon-hole labelled "R" for some dust-coated letters. After some sorting of the correspondence he picked out a note and tossed it to me. "Read that," he said. I read:—

"DEAR OLD BILL,—For God's sake don't throw us overboard. Yours, etc.,

"J. RICE."

THOMAS HARDY'S EARLY NOVELS.

"I remember Tom Hardy well when he first called upon me. He told me he was an architect but had given up his profession on account, I think, of some eye trouble.

Anyhow, I tried his first novel, 'Desperate Remedies,' in three volumes. It went very flat. The only decent review I can remember of it was in 'The Saturday,' but that was a good enough notice to make a publisher think he had got hold of something. So I tried him again with a little book, 'Under the Greenwood Tree.' I gave him five-and-twenty down, and got it out in two volumes. He told me then that he was a bit disappointed, but he meant to keep on—that he had always been studying the folk down in his country, and had made notes enough about their queer sayings and doings to fill many volumes. I believed in him, and when the 'Greenwood Tree' was out I asked him to write a serial story for the magazine and I'd give him a hundred pounds for it. So his third book came along—'A Pair of Blue Eyes.' After running it in the magazine I got it out in three volumes. There was no great money in it but I could see that Hardy was going to get a grip some day. While the 'Pair of Blue Eyes' was running through the magazine Hardy called on me and said he wanted to be quite fair and quite candid with me. The editor of another magazine had written to him offering

to take a novel from him, and this editor's firm was willing to give three hundred pounds for it. I think it was three hundred —anyhow, it seemed too much money for me to give with my experience of him so far; so I thanked him very much and said, 'Take the offer, my boy. I couldn't spring so much.' I seem to be very unlucky, Downey, about fourth novels, for the one I declined was 'Far From the Madding Crowd.' Of course, I hadn't seen it—but even if I had it wouldn't have made any difference. Whether a novel is good, bad or indifferent, a publisher has only got to think of one thing: is there money in it for him? I have had plenty of experience of trying clever first novels and making a loss on them—through no fault of mine or the author's. And then a publisher makes a hit with a later book, having had no experience of the author before, and he blows a lot about the cleverness and—what d'ye call it?—his insight. And the deuce a bit more cleverness he has than poor me. It's all a toss up. Sometimes the public take to an author in the start. Sometimes they don't take to him for years. And all the time that he's not in the running,

some unfortunate publisher is losing his money on him; and generally you'll find it is the fellow who hasn't had the experience of losing the money that makes a hit with many an author, and then crows about it. Now, there was George Meredith—one of the biggest men we've had. You read his 'Rhoda Fleming' the other day. Wouldn't you think that was good enough to knock 'em?"*

WILLIAM FAUX'S "OPINIONS."

The first "taster" of Thomas Hardy's fiction was not a professional publisher's reader.

Mr. William Faux, the chief of Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son's library department for about forty years—he retired only last year—was an old friend of "Bill" Tinsley. He found the publisher one day examining a manuscript, and half in jest he offered to read it. Mr. Faux gave a glowing report of the MS. which bore the title of "Desperate Remedies." He was sadly disappointed to find that the press did not endorse his opinion of the novel; and his disappointment did not vanish until *The Saturday Review* "dis-

* Amongst his own publications two of his especial favourites were "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Rhoda Fleming."

WILKIE COLLINS.

[*To face page* 23.

covered" "Desperate Remedies" (some considerable time after its first publication) and declared that a new planet had swum into the literary skies.

Mr. Faux was also the earliest critic to appreciate the abounding merits of "Ready-Money Mortiboy." While this novel was going through the press he read it in proof. By accident, he met, at Catherine Street, James Rice; and he spoke so encouragingly to Rice about "Mortiboy" that the young novelist ever afterwards regarded William Faux as—next to Walter Besant—his best friend and his most valuable literary adviser.

A PEEP AT THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE."

I was with my chief one afternoon in his cosy corner at the Gaiety bar when he suddenly sprang up and walked towards a small marble-topped table at which was seated a plump, spectacled man, wearing something of a country-squireish air. He spoke to this man for some time and then he returned to me.

"The face of your friend seems somehow familiar, and yet I don't think I ever saw him in the flesh before," said I.

"That's old Wilkie Collins," said Mr. Tinsley. "There he goes!" as "old Wilkie" rose and nodded a good-bye to the publisher. I was thrilled with excitement at beholding the author of "The Woman in White." Mr. Tinsley guffawed when I revealed to him my awe-inspired feelings concerning Wilkie Collins.

"My boy," said he, "you'd be much more awed if you had to negotiate a book with him. He's as shrewd as they make 'em. Tell you about my dealings with him. When he started 'The Moonstone' in *All the Year Round*, I told Charley Dickens I'd be glad to publish it. I never had any dealings with Dickens himself—he was bound up with the Chapmans—but he spoke to Wilkie about the 'Moonstone' and we arranged the deal. As you know, I was never in the habit of fixing up long-winded agreements.* A simple exchange of letters was our usual style. But, in the case of 'The Moonstone,' Wilkie's solicitors sent in a draft which was a regular corker; it would pretty well cover the gable of an

* "With this excellent man," writes Mr. Percy Fitzgerald (in his "Recreations of a Literary Man") "—and we have had innumerable transactions—I never had a scrap of writing in the shape of an agreement. His word and my word were sufficient and made the bond."

ordinary-sized house. I was to pay so much down for so many copies in three volumes, and so much for every further two hundred and fifty copies. I did fairly well with the book—but nothing to shout about in those days. When I considered that the sale was over, or nearly over, in three-volume form, Master Wilkie thought I ought to venture on another edition, paying him, of course, in advance and on the original terms. The thing looked too risky, but I offered to do it if the terms were reduced, explaining my views and showing that if I paid on the whole edition and had anything like a large surplus of unsold copies that I'd lose money. Master Wilkie cried off and said he'd do the book elsewhere. This was his affair, so I said no more.

"Shortly afterwards, the printer of the book said to me: 'I suppose you don't want the type of "The Moonstone" any longer?' 'No,' said I, 'you can break it up.' And then a thought flashed across me. 'Hold hard!' said I. 'Have you been hearing from anybody in connection with the type of "The Moonstone?"' The printer was obliged to admit that he had. 'And you want to use my type and save someone

else from setting up the book again. No you don't, my friend,' said I. 'I'll keep my eyes open for the next edition of "The Moonstone," and if it's my type you can look out for squalls.' A few days later Master Wilkie's people informed me that they would accept *my* terms for a new edition of 'The Moonstone.' They were pretty sharp, I think, but I was just as wide awake. Same time, the little breeze cost me the loss of further business with Master Wilkie. Just my luck!"*

BUSINESS MAXIMS.

I will conclude this chapter by stating that Tinsley had two business maxims which, when I first heard them propounded, startled me. One was that one's Bankers' Pass-Book was the surest and truest guide to one's financial position. The other was that "Letters answer themselves." I had been taught to believe that business letters should invariably be attended to upon the day they were received. When I would consult Mr. Tinsley about the nature of a reply to a

* In his "Recollections," William Tinsley gives a version of his dealings with Wilkie Collins which differs in some respects from what I have set down here. I can only say I am faithfully reporting his version of this particular transaction as he told it to me.

" difficult " letter, he would take it from me and put it into a " pigeon-hole " which crowned his desk. " That's answered, my boy," he would say, with a smile. " Don't you worry ! "

CHAPTER II.

SOME CHRONICLES OF CATHERINE STREET.

In this chapter I am giving some anecdotes of William Tinsley and of his business, derived from a memory of my personal experiences during the years I spent at No. 8, Catherine Street.

Many a time he and I laughed over our alarums and excursions, and if many of my anecdotes are "small-beer chronicles," they may possibly shed some light upon that queer tract of Bohemia which had for its capital the office of *Tinsleys' Magazine*.

Tavern Bohemia and Club Bohemia were, no doubt, more alluring, and probably (in the matter of anecdotes) better-furnished regions, but my knowledge of life in the first-named province was mainly hearsay, my

wanderings into licensed haunts being confined for the most part to an occasional visit to the Gaiety Restaurant (the side entrance to which stood over against the door of Tinsley Brothers' office); and I was never a member of any club.

THE PRIMROSE PATH.

William Tinsley was an early riser and a hardworking and enthusiastic gardener; and by the time he had gone through his morning letters at the office, he was usually ready for his luncheon. He would lounge across Catherine Street about mid-day and dive into "The Gaiety."

Anyone who remembers the blizzard of eighteen eighty-one will remember that the snow cumbered the streets of London in tremendous heaps. On the morning after "Snow Tuesday" the drift in Catherine Street was some four to five feet high. When I reached the office on Wednesday morning I found that our warehouseman (and factotum), Mr. Fred Coule, had been hard at work with pick and spade. He had made some minor excavations in the snow-drift, but his *chef-d'œuvre* was a laneway leading directly from the door of 8, Catherine

Street to the door of Spiers and Pond's temple.

When Mr. Tinsley arrived he gazed suspiciously and grimly at the long snow-flanked laneway. "Whose brilliant idea is this?" he asked. Then, as he stood staring at the vista, the humour of the situation appealed to him and he burst into one of his loud fits of laughter. "No use in my offering to join the Blue Ribbon Army after this," he said. "Wonder what Chris. Pond will think of it!"

A PENNY VERSUS A GUINEA-AND-A-HALF.

Mr. Tinsley had a keen appreciation of a joke, even when the joke was against himself. It was almost painful to sit with him in a theatre if the play happened to tickle him. His boisterous laugh filled the house, and when he began to laugh it was well-nigh impossible for him to stop. A humourous actor of his acquaintance came to the footlights one night, and much to the astonishment of the audience said: "I'm sorry to say that I cannot proceed until Mr. Tinsley removes himself from the house."

Tinsley was a regular "first-nighter." In-

deed the theatre was one of his passions. The *Entr'acte* published a portrait of him with the legend: "The Bill of the Play." * It didn't matter what the performance was — opera, tragedy, comedy, farce. He enjoyed everything, especially if any of the actors or actresses were pals of his.

I remember one night going to the opera at Covent Garden. My seat was in the gallery and Mr. Tinsley, with some members of his family, occupied a box. After the opera was over, I met the Tinsleys in the entrance hall. They were chatting with Mr. Johnson, proprietor of the *London Journal*, then one of the most prosperous of the penny weeklies. The carriages were coming up in due order under the Piazza in Bow Street, each carriage being announced by the loud-voiced commissionaires. As we stood at the door we heard the cry, "Mr. Johnson's carriage." A handsome brougham got into the line, and, immediately after it came a hired vehicle looking very shabby in comparison with the *London Journal* "turn out." "Mr. Tinsley's carriage!" was the cry. Tinsley instantly burst into noisy

* The sketch facing page 3 is a reduced impression of this portrait.

laughter. "Good night, Billy," he cried to Johnson. "Look at our respective shandradans. One is thirty-one and sixpence (alluding to the price of his own literary ware, the three-volume novel)—"the other is a penny."

A BREAKFAST WITH MONSIGNOR CAPEL.

One day Mr. Tinsley said to me: "I want you to come with me to-morrow to the —— Hotel. Johnny Toole is breakfasting with a distinguished churchman, and he invited me to come along and to bring a friend if I choosed." I thanked Mr. Tinsley and told him I had no particular desire to encounter distinguished churchmen. In fact I did not quite understand the connection between Mr. J. L. Toole and churchmen.

"But this is one of your Roman crowd," urged Mr. Tinsley. "It's Monsignor Capel —the man that Dizzy describes in 'Lothair.'"

I was still not to be tempted, but I said: "I'm sure O'Shea* would be glad of the opportunity. May I tell him of it?"

*At this period John Augustus O'Shea was on the staff of *The Standard*—for many years he was its most brilliant Special Correspondent—but his *Standard* duties did not prevent him from being a valued contributor to weekly papers and to monthly magazines. He was one of my most intimate and most cherished friends.

"All right," said he; "write to Johnny. The engagement is for breakfast at eleven."

I fancied that John Augustus O'Shea, being a writer for the Roman Catholic organ, *The Universe*, would be able to make some copy out of Monsignor Capel, whereas I could make no use of the opportunity.

The next morning Tinsley and O'Shea started off for the hotel. It was a foggy morning, but the fog cleared off about noon. I didn't see Mr. Tinsley until after luncheon, and I was then surprised to find that he said nothing about the breakfast. He seemed to be out of sorts.

Next day I met O'Shea. I enquired what had happened at the breakfast.

"Why do you ask?" said O'Shea. "Didn't Bill tell you about it?"

"No, he seemed as if something had upset him."

"I suppose I oughtn't to give him away," said O'Shea, "but it can't hurt. I expect you noticed that he was a bit drowsy when we started out. I think he had a dance at home the previous night and didn't get to bed until late in the small hours. Anyhow he was off colour. We all noticed it during the breakfast. Toole tried to chaff him,

but he wasn't in form to be drawn out. We breakfasted with the lights on and when the meal was about finished my brave Tinsley fell asleep in his chair. Instantly Toole induced the Monsignor to dive under the table with him. As soon as the pair were under the table the sun suddenly blazed out and Tinsley awoke with a start out of his two minutes' doze. He stared around him in a dazed way.

"'What's this, Jack?' said he. 'Seems as if I had dropped off to sleep. Where's Toole?'

"'O,' said I, yawning, 'you've worn us all out. The Monsignor and Toole waited at the table for two solid hours listening to you snoring. We didn't like to rouse you up.'

"'I wouldn't have wished this to have happened, not for a ten pound note, Jack,' said he. 'The Monsignor, by the by, is a pretty dry customer. I was wondering how he could have got the pull on the Marquis.'

"Toole tittered, and Tinsley, pulling out his watch, saw he had been sold.

"But, on my word," added O'Shea, "I think poor Capel was more sold when he got

JAMES RICE.

[*To face page* 35.

to his feet and realized that he had been caught playing the fool."

COLLABORATION WITH JAMES RICE.

In 1880 Tinsley Brothers were involved in an irritating piracy action. The firm had published, some years previously, a novel entitled "Loyal," by Mrs. G. W. Godfrey (whose husband was the author of the successful play "The Parvenu"). Subsequently they published a novel entitled "A Mad Marriage," written by a Canadian lady, Mrs. May Agnes Fleming. When both books were more or less out of the running—certainly when "Loyal" was—it occurred to Mrs. Godfrey that "A Mad Marriage" was a plagiarism of "Loyal." Damages were claimed and legal proceedings instituted. It was a particularly hard case so far as William Tinsley was concerned. He had published both books and he had made little or no money out of one or the other. "A Mad Marriage" was quite a clever book. Copies of this six-shilling edition of it were frequently enquired for, but I never (during my time at Catherine Street) heard of any enquiry for "Loyal."

I was asked by the defendants solicitors to

read and compare both books as a preliminary experiment. I could trace very little resemblance between the stories. There was a slight similarity in the plots, but the treatment and style were utterly different.

James Rice happened to call at Catherine Street and Tinsley mentioned the matter to him. Rice was a barrister as well as an author of consequence. He offered to read the books and also volunteered to appear in the case. I saw Rice a few times in his office in Chancery Lane, and eventually he gave me the draught of an elaborate "opinion" about the books. I took this away with me and I noticed that there were a good many blank spaces here and there in the text. Next time I met Rice I asked him what the blanks meant.

"I was in a hurry," said he, with a smile. "These are the spaces for the adjectives. Fill them in yourself."

I suppose I may in this instance claim to have collaborated with the part author of "Ready Money Mortiboy."

The case did not come into court. It was settled by the solicitors on the terms of each party paying his own costs.

Oddly enough, the matter turned up again

about a dozen years later, when the Godfreys instituted proceedings against *The London Journal* for publishing (or re-publishing) "A Mad Marriage" in that periodical. Sir Walter Besant interested himself in the case, and I thought he would be glad to know that somewhere or other existed (in all likelihood) the report of his literary partner. A search was made at the solicitors' for James Rice's "opinion," but the document could not be found.*

THE WRONG "FLEET."

I was often amused by Sir Walter Besant's attacks upon publishers. His early fulminations were hurled at a time when he himself was practically a publisher—or at any rate a manufacturer of books. I remember a visit of a bookbinder to Catherine Street one afternoon. In showing me some "sample cases" he produced the cloth case intended for "The Chaplain of the Fleet." I noticed that this had some small nautical designs upon it, and I pointed out to the binder that the "Fleet" in question was not

* Sir Walter, by the way, in replying to me, insisted that the date of the action against Tinsley Brothers was not in 1880, as I stated, but in 1874, when Rice and he were arranging for the publication of "This Son of Vulcan." My date was the correct one.

a floating one but the once famous prison. The bookbinder was aghast. "I have blocked the cases," said he. "Oh, never mind!" said I. "Mr. Chatto will be sure to forgive you if you throw yourself upon his mercy." "Very likely Mr. Chatto would overlook the blunder," said he; "unfortunately it is not with Chatto and Windus I have to deal, but with the author; and I'm pretty certain *he* won't overlook it."

RECOGNIZING FLORENCE MARRYAT.

"Here's a letter from Florence Marryat," said Mr. Tinsley to me one morning. "She wants me to buy a new three-volume novel from her. I don't know whether I'll do it or not. I'll write to her telling her to call. If I'm out of the way when she calls you can talk to her, and find out what she really wants. I have an idea she is merely trying to get me to make a market for her. I'll leave her to you." I asked how I was to recognize her if she called. It happened occasionally that when a stranger (to me) visited Catherine Street, he, or she, finding that the chief was absent would go away leaving no name. "You'll recognize her easy enough," said Mr. Tinsley. "She is a tall, striking-looking

woman, and she'll talk to you just like a man." This was somewhat ambiguous; still I felt I should recognize the lady if she did happen to talk to me.

A few days later a tall lady called. I fancied she might be Miss Marryat. She looked round the office, and then, addressing me, she said: "Is Bill in?" I replied that Mr. Tinsley was not in. Could I do anything for her? "I must see Bill himself," she said. "Tell the old bounder I called." "You're Miss Marryat," I ventured. "Yes. But stop! How the devil do you know I'm Miss Marryat? I never saw you before."

THE WEARIN' OF THE GREEN.

The first St. Patrick's Day I spent in London was in the year 1880. I arrived at Catherine Street in the morning wearing a tuft of shamrock in my coat-lapel. (The correct form of shamrock-wearing is to exhibit the chosen leaf in your hat, but this is by the way.) When Mr. Tinsley arrived his eyes instantly lighted upon my green buttonhole.

"What's that you're wearing, Downey?" said he. "Shamrock is it?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Throw it away, my boy," said he.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because I wish it. I can't have any of this Irish rebel business going on in my office."

I protested that there was nothing "rebelly" in the wearing of the green, but he would have it that there was. I told him I was sorry if the shamrock offended him, that I meant no offence and that I could not desert my colours (or colour).

He tackled me again after luncheon. "Wearing that damned thing still!" said he.

"Why should it anger you?" I asked.

"It's like a red rag to a bull," he growled. "Don't let me see it again."* I kept out of his sight for the remainder of the afternoon. When he was starting for home about six o'clock he sang out: "You there, Downey? You may as well walk along with me towards King's Cross." My ordinary retiring hour at that period was seven o'clock, and I was in hopes that Mr. Tinsley would have started for home without again

* Writing to his brother in 1824, Gerald Griffin speaks of walking through Hyde Park with John Banim on St. Patrick's Day, both novelists valiantly wearing shamrock in their hats—"even under the eye of John Bull." Times are changed!

beholding my emblem. When I went into his room he looked at me and then he laughed.

"Well, you *have* cheek," said he, "to wear that shamrock in defiance of me. But come," he added, after a momentary pause, "let me have a bit of it just for the fun of the thing."

I divided my sprig and he pinned the moiety on the lapel of his black coat. "There," said he, "no one can say I'm bigoted. Come along," he continued, "I'm going to walk to King's Cross and save eighteenpence. Must be economical these hard times."

Mr. Tinsley had an affection for back streets and out-of-the-way routes. He used to describe them to me as "short cuts," but when I came to know London better I found that many of these short cuts were deceptive, and that the truth was Mr. Tinsley liked the obscure by-ways better than the more crowded highways. At this time there was an endless variety of slummy streets and passages lying between the Strand and Holborn or Oxford Street. One of Mr. Tinsley's favourite short cuts lay through the comparative oasis of Clare Market—a hal-

lowed spot, sacred to fish—fresh fish, salt fish, stale fish, fried fish, shell fish, fish-hawkers male and female—fish in every condition, even to decay—and to its merchants in every condition from broadcloth to rags.

When we arrived in sight of Clare Market I observed a group of women (concerned obviously with the business of fish-vending) standing at the corner of the street. They looked as if they had been indulging a little too freely in drink. They were discoursing loudly and conducting themselves a little boisterously. Suddenly the eyes of one of the scale-bedizened group caught sight of the shamrock in Mr. Tinsley's black coat, and as he unsuspectingly walked along she shouted: "O holy Nelly, look at the gentleman's shamrock! O my darling man," said she, rushing upon him and flinging her arms round the astounded publisher, "isn't it meself that's delighted to see you sportin' the plant?"

What might have ensued I hardly know—my companion was furious and the ladies were all moving towards him—had not the loud voice of a fish-merchant who kept the corner shop, and who was patronised by Mr. Tinsley, saved us. The fishmonger called

out: "Get away, girls!" He was a power in Clare Market and he quickly put an end to the horseplay.

My chief took the matter fairly well. "I damned your shamrock this morning, Downey," said he, tearing the plant from his coat and dashing it to the ground, "and I damn it doubly now. I might have known I'd have no luck in wearing it. Anyhow, I can never wear this coat again. Serves me right for trying to save the eighteenpenny cab fare. That's what comes of trying to be economical."

WILLIAM TINSLEY'S MEMORY.

He possessed that peculiar kind of memory which is usually found in those who will have nothing to do with note-books or memoranda or any other written aid. He could remember anything concerning the price paid for a book published by his firm, the number of copies printed, the number sold and the whereabouts of the existing stock (if any); and considering that Tinsley Brothers issued probably upwards of two thousand separate publications during the period of its existence, I think one may describe his memory as remarkable. I am

told that he lost a good deal of this acuteness in his later years, but the following anecdote will show that he did not lose it altogether.

A few years before his death he called upon me. "I had a curious bit of luck the other day," said he. "You remember Burton's 'Wanderings in West Africa.' Well, I had some correspondence with solicitors about my rights in the book, and it suddenly flashed across me that there was a whole edition of it untouched at Clowes' for over thirty years. It came about in this way. I was printing a six-shilling edition of 'Henry Dunbar' at the same time that I was doing a new edition of 'Burton's West Africa.' The books were a different size and the printers used the wrong papers. They discovered after printing 'West Africa' that they had done it on 'Dunbar's' paper. It wasn't the book I wanted, so I made a bargain with Clowes, and sent in a fresh supply of paper and had the edition done over again. I went to Clowes' the other day and asked them to hunt the old edition up. They laughed at me. Said 'twas simply impossible that the books could remain unnoticed in their warehouse or their stock books all the time. But I stuck to it that

the books were there. It gave me quite a turn, Downey, when they began the search. There wasn't a man in the place, except one of the partners, who had been there when 'Henry Dunbar' was printed. All dead, or gone somehow. But I was right, my boy. They discovered the whole of my edition of 'West Africa,' and I sold it to the people who are getting out that collected edition of Burton's books. You always used to wonder at my memory about my old stock. Thought I'd drop in and tell you this."

HOPES—AND AN OPINION.

At the close of 1894—about seven years before his death—he wrote a long letter to me in which there are some passages which are possibly of interest. He had just completed his "Recollections" and he was anxious that I should publish the book for him.

"I have learnt" (he wrote) "more how to be a publisher and a business man since I have been out of business, than I did all the time I was in it. If I had another try—and I think I shall—I will not be the easy-going fool I was. My misfortunes have taught me a lesson indeed . . . But even though

I blame those who imposed upon me in my green days, I am sure there was only one fool, and I was he . . . Mind, the *great book*" (his 'Recollections') "is more cheerful than my letters to you would intimate. There are not six growls in it—at least I hope not . . . I must see what I can do" (about entering the publishing business again) . . . "I know I was never in better health and clearer in mind than I am now. I am heartily sick of doing nothing."

A friend of mine, a distinguished author, who knew William Tinsley throughout most of his publishing life, wrote to me about a meeting with him very shortly before his death—"Poor old Tinsley! I am so sorry for him. We looked at each other, and each knew what was in the mind of the other: How badly he was treated by everybody in that clever, unprincipled set" (a certain section of the set of the 'Sixties and 'Seventies), "and how very badly he had been treated, I am afraid, by himself!"

CHAPTER III.

FURTHER CHRONICLES OF CATHERINE STREET.

I.

In this chapter, and in the one which follows it, I am giving brief sketches and anecdotes of interesting men whom, with one exception, I met at Catherine Street. Of the various men mentioned in these two chapters, a dozen have passed away. I am not attempting to criticize the literary work of my old acquaintances or to furnish any serious or extensive records of their lives, either as authors or as private individuals. I am merely jotting down some anecdote about one or another.

CHARLES DICKENS'S OFFICE.

One of the earliest " missions " upon which I was despatched, was to " young Charles

Dickens"—the eldest son of the great man. I found Mr. Dickens seated in a somewhat dimly-lighted room on the first floor of the office of *All the Year Round*, in Wellington Street. When we had discussed the business which brought me to him, Mr. Dickens said, in a kind of apologetic way: "This is a dingy, dusty, musty-looking room, but it is exactly as my father left it. I haven't dared even to tamper with the curtains." I can still recall the electric throb which thrilled me when I knew that I was in the room sacred to the author of "David Copperfield," undisturbed even by pious hands.

I had many transactions with Mr. Dickens, subsequently. Sometimes I saw his manager, Mr. Holdsworth, whose office was on the ground floor. Mr. Holdsworth was full of memories of his great chief. He always referred to him as "the old governor." I could hardly refrain from smiling when I heard Charles Dickens referred to as "the old governor"—it seemed to me to be almost absurd that he should have been regarded by anyone as "the governor."

Talking one day to Mr. Holdsworth at the bottom of the narrow staircase which

led to the editorial department, he said: "He was wonderfully quick about things little and big. I suppose you know that he had a peculiar dread of fire. Coming down the stairs here one day he called out to me, and I met him just where we are standing now." (I pictured to myself instantly the figure of Dickens coming down the staircase, and I can recall another electric thrill.) "'Holdsworth,' said he, 'where are the keys of the house kept, after the place is locked up for the night?'" "The housekeeper takes them upstairs, sir," said I. (The housekeeper slept then on the top floor.) 'If the place caught fire,' said he, 'the chances are that the housekeeper would run downstairs in a panic, and forget all about the keys and find himself in a trap. Or if the fire didn't arouse him, and if anyone wanted to get upstairs, this door at the bottom of the stairs would be locked, and valuable time would be lost breaking it open.' "And what is your idea, sir?" I asked, knowing that some plan had swiftly occurred to him. 'Get a brick or two knocked out of the wall,' said he, 'and the hole can have a glass door, and a little gas-jet burning alongside it.

This will catch the eye promptly, and if an emergency arises, the glass can easily be broken, in order to get at the keys.' "There is our key-safe—the old governor's idea," said Mr. Holdsworth, pointing to a glazed receptacle in the wall. "I understand it was this which gave the Fire Brigade the idea of putting alarms in the streets with a glass-front, and I believe the plan is adopted in many warehouses now."

JOHN F. KEANE ("HAJJI MOHAMMED AMIN").

One of the earliest of the manuscripts entrusted to me at 8, Catherine Street was an account written by Mr. John F. Keane,* of a pilgrimage which he had performed—a pilgrimage from Jeddah to Meccah. The author asserted that, disguising himself as a Mohammedan, he had joined the retinue of an Afghan prince, and had duly arrived at the Holy City, and that he had discovered there an English lady who had been spirited off to Arabia during the days of the Indian Mutiny.

* One of Keane's books—"Three Years of a Wanderer's Life"—has recently been raised to a high plane. Rudyard Kipling has included it in a list of books which he drew up for someone who was about to form a school library.

Keane's introduction to Tinsley Brothers was from Captain Burton. A good deal of doubt was cast upon the authenticity of the young traveller's narrative when his book—"Six Months in Meccah"—was published, but Captain Burton, amongst others, was satisfied that John Keane had performed the pilgrimage.

Up to the time of the publication of "Six Months in Meccah," only three European Christians had succeeded in earning the title of Hajji—an Italian traveller, Richard Burton, and John F. Keane; but the latter assured me that the pilgrimage had been successfully accomplished by two bold Americans who, scorning disguises, had travelled to Meccah clothed in flannels and check trousers, and wearing Panama hats. The American gentlemen had a very simple mission to perform—the introduction of kerosene into the interior of the forbidden country—and, according to Keane, they succeeded in procuring orders. The tomb of the Prophet and its surroundings are now illuminated with "low flash" American oil—if I am to believe the veracious Hajji Mohammed Amin.

A striking confirmation of the truth of

Keane's narrative, and a tribute to his remarkable powers of description, arose some years after the publication of his book. The *Graphic* succeeded in obtaining a photograph of Meccah, and a reproduction of this was published as an extra double page illustration. The *Graphic* found that the description which most accurately fitted the picture was Keane's, and quotations from his book appeared concurrently with the illustration.

Keane was an extraordinarily wild, and an extremely interesting, young man at the time he took his manuscript to Catherine Street. He was overflowing with animal spirits and throbbing with humour. For a short period he endeavoured to accommodate himself to a sort of literary life, but the sea was always calling him. He had run away to sea as a youth, and though he was of gentle birth, he preferred a life of adventure—even when it meant a professional voyage in a sailing ship—to the tamer walks of the Strand. He had a weakness at intervals for taking "pier-head jumps"—that is, going down to the docks, and finding a ship which is sailing for "anywhere," and is short of a hand at the last

moment. You might meet Keane perambulating the Strand—his custom of an afternoon, when he was ashore—and the next time you would hear of him, his temporary address would be Hong-Kong, or Honolulu, or Melbourne, or Rio de Janeiro, or Greenland. Amongst his passions was one for whaling. He had been a whaler in Arctic seas and in Antarctic waters.

I had lost all trace of Keane at one time for about a twelvemonth, and one morning at Catherine Street I heard a noisy tramp, tramp in the long passage which led up to the counter. Looking out from my desk, I beheld a dozen sailors marching up the passage in pairs. They were all in full sailor fig, even to their sheath-knives and great sea-boots. The next thing I saw was a small man taking a flying leap over the counter. "Hallo, Downey!" cried Keane, gripping my hand. "Back again. This is a sample of the crew of my ship. Not one of the beggars will believe that I wrote a book, so I thought I'd take them up here, as soon as we got the ship fast in the St. Katharine Dock." He then introduced me, seriatim, to his mess-mates. The chief officer—a splendid-looking seaman,

hailing from Dublin—said: "We want to know if Jack Keane is really an author." "Most certainly he is," I answered. "You can see copies of his book here." "Righto!" said the mate. "We thought it was one of his larks. In fact we all have a bet on it."

At this moment, Mr. Tinsley entered the passage-way. He seemed to be utterly bewildered when he saw the passage blocked with sailor men. As he advanced towards the counter, gazing wonderingly at the crowd, Keane caught sight of him. "Boys," he cried, "this is my publisher. Give him a salvo!" Then the rafters rang.

After some explanations, Mr. Tinsley proposed that the crew should accompany him to the Gaiety Bar to drink there the health of able-bodied seaman, John F. Keane. A more bizarre group rarely stood at the bar of "The Gaiety"; and when the sailors lifted their glasses and burst into another cheer, in honour of their literary messmate, the frequenters of the Restaurant and the various attendants must have thought that some portion of the denizens of a nautical Bedlam had broken loose.

AN ABDUCTION FRUSTRATED.

In the course of a week, Keane was paid off from his ship, and again he resumed work with the pen. As soon as he had got accustomed to his new harness, he confided in me the scheme of a practical joke.

"Tinsley wants me to give him an inside peep at the sailor-quarters in the East End," said he, "and I have arranged to take him down there. I'll give him a good look round. We'll teach him how to hitch his trousers, and then we'll comb the hayseed out of his hair. When he has had his fill of sailor life on shore, I'll give him a chance to see blue water. The change will do him a lot of good. I mean to induce him to swallow some drugged liquor, and when he is comatose, I am going to dump him on board a three-master bound for Valparaiso. I have arranged it all with a crimp, who thinks he is going to have a real good steady sailor-man, who is just having a bit of a spree and will be all the better for a smell of salt water."

I enquired if this was a joke? "A rattling good joke," said Keane. "I can picture the scene myself when he wakes

up—probably in the Downs—and refuses to go aloft. Fancy his trying to bamboozle the skipper or the mate with some yarn about his being a publisher! They won't know the meaning of the word. All they'll believe is that he wants to shirk his work, or may be they'll think he is a longshoreman, who has been palmed off on them. Anyhow, the skipper, having paid half a month's advance on him, won't stand any nonsense, and aloft he'll have to go. I can fancy him, holding on by a weather-earring, insisting to the last that he is a publisher . . . Oh! it's a great lark . . . I see you don't enter into the spirit of the thing. All I can say is that if you spoil sport for any sentimental reason, I'll play a tougher joke on yourself."

Mr. Tinsley informed me, a little later, that he intended to have "a day off with Jack Keane." I did not acquaint him with the nature of the plot, but I warned him not to go eastwards with Hajji Mohammed Amin. At first he smiled, or scoffed, at my warnings. He was able to take care of himself, surely. However, I was so persistent that in the end he promised me to break the engagement.

Keane seemed to be woefully disappointed. He repeated his threat to punish me for spoiling sport. But the punishment did not go farther than sneering at my hopeless incapacity to appreciate a humorous situation.

GENERAL MACIVER.

Mention of Keane reminds me of another distinguished "adventurer"—I use the word in its best sense—who walked a good many miles in the Strand during the first half of the 'Eighties. I refer to Brigadier-General Ronald MacIver—the hero of "Under Fourteen Flags"*—a tall, soldierly-looking man, with inexorable, steel-grey eyes. He had borne arms in every clime, from China to Peru.

Sighing, like Alexander, for more worlds to conquer, MacIver glanced covetously at New Guinea, and he proposed to annex the island, fighting, if necessary, under a fifteenth flag—his own.

The General hired or purchased a schooner, and proceeded to fit her out for the expedition. (I don't know where the money

* "Under Fourteen Flags" was published in 2 vols. by Tinsley Brothers.

came from, but there was no lack of it. I have seen MacIver with bagsful of sovereigns.) The sailing ship was supplied with weapons of offence, and the general engaged several high-spirited Fleet Street men to accompany him to the Cannibal Island. Cecil Brooks (son of Shirley Brooks) was appointed Private Secretary, with a promise of a portfolio in the Papuan Ministry.

It seemed to me that there was an insufficient supply of adventurers of the nautical type concerned with this expedition, and I suggested Keane as a fit and proper person to navigate the schooner. In addition to his skill as a navigator, Keane had other valuable qualities. He had at one period of his extraordinary career tramped through Borneo, and I thought he would prove to be very useful if it became necessary to deal summarily with insurgent Papuans—or even to palaver with them.

MacIver agreed with me, that a man of Keane's stamp would "turn out very handy." He would be welcomed by the general with open arms. But Hajji Keane was "abroad" at the time, and none of us knew his address.

When matters were ripening in the

Thames—I think the schooner was lying in the Surrey Docks—the attention of the authorities was called to MacIver's daring project, and Lord Derby (fancying, no doubt, that Germany or Holland might object to the seizure of New Guinea by a British subject), pounced upon the ship. An angry correspondence—at least one side of it was very angry—ensued in the columns of *The Times*, Lord Derby describing MacIver's project as a filibustering expedition.

Eventually the general decided to turn his back upon the Thames and to visit Australia, with a view to starting proceedings at the Antipodes. He lectured in Australia, advocating the seizure of New Guinea from shore to shore; but the Australians could not be induced to warm to the scheme. MacIver voyaged to Papua in the company of a fellow countryman, the well-known artist and author, Mr. Hume Nisbet; but it was merely a pacific visit for prospecting purposes.

When Keane arrived in London, I informed him of the opportunity he had missed of becoming an Admiral. He was amused when I mentioned the names of some

of the Bohemians who proposed to accompany General MacIver's expedition, and he told me that if he had been put in charge of the navigating operations, and if he had succeeded in leaving Old England on the lee, he would have steered the man-o'-war to some uninhabited island in the Pacific—"for a lark." He would inform the principal members of the expedition that the desolate island was New Guinea; and as soon as he had got the "filibusterers" ashore he would set sail with the schooner and her contents, leaving the "gentlemen adventurers," to set up an establishment after the fashion of the "Bounty" mutineers, or of the "Swiss Family Robinson."

The last time I met General MacIver—about a dozen years ago—he was busily engaged in employing and deporting men to work upon the Nicaragua Canal. I asked him what was the nature of the Nicaraguan climate? "Europeans die like flies there," said the general, grimly.

The last I heard of MacIver was that he was War Minister, or Finance Minister, in some South-American or Central-American republic. For many years I held an interesting trophy with which he presented

me on a memorable occasion. (I lost it when once I was house-moving—*sic transit!*) It was a huge blackthorn, marked on its huge knob with five notches, each notch chronicling a broken skull. While the blackthorn was in my custody, I must admit that I had no convenient opportunity of adding a notch to it.

W. S. JOHNSON.

A confirmed Tinsleyite was Mr. W. S. Johnson of the Nassau Press, proprietor of *The London Journal*. He was a lightly-built, dapper, sprightly man. As he walked briskly through the streets, swinging his arms, he was always humming. His favourite perch at Catherine Street was the counter. He would spring lightly upon this with an air which said: "What do you think of that for an old grey-beard?"

According to Mr. Athol Mayhew (in his lively little book, "A Jorum of Punch") it was to Johnson that Henry Mayhew brought his first dummy copy of the future London Charivari. Henry Mayhew declared that Johnson bitterly regretted his lack of enterprise (or appreciation), and that when he met Mayhew he used to pretend to drive

him from him with a wave of the hand, saying: "Go away! I can't bear to see you."

Tinsley and Johnson were "cronies." They were "Billy" to each other. Early in the 'Eighties the proprietor of *The London Journal* was either growing tired of his property or becoming anxious about it. He proposed to sell it, and Tinsley was to find a syndicate to purchase it. I was to manage the Journal. Johnson allowed me to have a view of his private ledgers for the purpose of arranging the deal, and I found some of the figures amazing. For a considerable time the circulation had remained in the neighbourhood of half a million copies, and it can break no confidence now to say that Johnson used to draw regularly £1,000 a month out of it. It must be borne in mind that it was a penny publication, relying solely upon its circulation; it printed no advertisements—nowadays the backbone of any cheap publication. At the time I was investigating it, the circulation (and of course the profits) had dropped heavily. Johnson's idea of the value of the property was about £30,000. One morning Mr. Tinsley informed me, gleefully,

that he had got his syndicate together. During the same week the negotiations fell through, the purchase price being the difficulty.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

I remember meeting Johnson one Saturday afternoon in St. Martin's Lane.

"Hallo!" said he. "Billy" (*i.e.*, William Tinsley) "tells me that you have just been married. Never heard a word about it before. You must allow me to make you a wedding present."

We were close to a glass shop, and he continued: "Come in here, Downey, and take whatever you like out of the shop—as much as you can comfortably carry away, my boy. I'm in a deuce of a hurry so you mustn't mind my running off. Help yourself." He then whispered a few words to the lady who was looking after the ware.

I selected a claret jug and a water bottle. I felt that they made as large a parcel as I could conveniently carry through the streets without running the risk of being taken for a tallyman or a shop-lifter.

I told Tinsley on Monday morning of

Johnson's kindness. He laughed loudly, and I felt he knew something which I did not know.

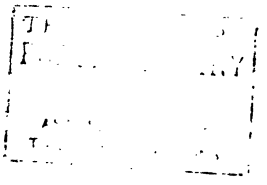
"Billy owes you more than a couple of jugs," said he. "Why the deuce did you miss your opportunity? He'll never give you another of the same kind."

"I couldn't, conveniently, have carried away any more of the stock," I said, apologetically.

"My boy, what about a four-wheel cab?"

"That would have looked rather greedy. He might jib at the bill."

"Not a bit of it. There wouldn't have been any bill. Wish Billy had given me the chance. I'd have hired a pair-horse van. The glass shop and all that's in it belongs to Johnson—on the q.t. It's one of his fads. Like myself, he isn't given to stock-taking, and if you had carted away the whole blooming contents of the shop he wouldn't have minded when he is in the humour he was in on Saturday. Might easily have set yourself up in the china and glass business. My boy, you don't know how to look after your own interests."



LEOPOLD LEWIS.

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THE AUTHOR OF "THE BELLS."

Leopold Lewis was a most charming man when he forgot that he was a distinguished dramatist and a distinguished litterateur. Literary vanity is an extraordinary (and a fulsome) disease. I have known many a good man who suffered from it. It makes of the most sensible, the most clever, the most amusing, the most agreeable man a fool or a bore (for the nonce). It spoilt a very good fellow when it spoilt Leopold Lewis, but I expect his one success—*The Bells*—had a hand in ruining him. Unless a dramatist, author, or journalist can keep pounding away, adding to his successes, it were better for him that he had never been born—into the world of letters or plays. A solitary success is infinitely more to be dreaded than a succession of failures. An infallible cure for literary pride would be a course of publishing, or, in the case of a dramatist, a course of theatrical management. But this is another story.

Lewis had been a solicitor, but his leanings towards the life Bohemian had drawn him gradually away from attorneyship. He possessed considerable skill in the art of

play-writing, and he contributed some clever stories and sketches to magazines and weekly periodicals. He had—or he professed to have—an extraordinary belief in his literary ability and originality. He will be remembered, when his original work is wholly forgotten, by his successful adaptation of Erckman and Chatrian's "Le Juif Polonais" —*The Bells*.

Lewis was in the habit of declaring that *The Bells* would have been damned if Bateman, the somewhat choleric manager of the Lyceum Theatre, had not been over-ruled. The play, Leopold assured me, was rehearsed with the sleigh-bells audible only in imagination to Matthias. (I think this was the manner in which the original French version was played.) It occurred to Lewis one night that the bells should be audible to the audience, and the tink-a-tink "business" was rehearsed. Bateman argued that the thing was preposterous—that the idea of the imaginary bells being heard by the audience was in itself an absurd idea, and that the audience, moreover, would laugh at the absurdity. Lewis—again I am repeating his statement—was certain that the bells should be heard, that the sound gave

the necessary weird effect to the play. Henry Irving sided with the playwright, and Bateman unwillingly consented to the "audible" arrangement.

A BRILLIANT IDEA.

Lewis tried his hand at other plays—original and translated—but he did not seem to make headway. However, his belief in himself remained. He endeavoured to convince me that he was the most original writer in London, and he declared that he was prepared to challenge all literary London to a contest. The literary man of the day, according to Leopold, was a mere copyist. He prigged his ideas, he prigged his style, he relied upon the brains of past generations, he "faked" bits out of other people's books—every kind of book down even to Dictionaries and Guide-books. He invented nothing—he had no imagination. "The match I want to arrange," said Lewis, stroking his great tawny moustache, "is one which might take place, say, in the Reading Room of the British Museum. Each competitor should be locked into a glass case—a transparent glass case." (The surrounding books on the shelves would be

tantalus-like fruit.) "Before he was locked up he should be carefully examined, even to the shirt cuffs, in order to make it certain that he was concealing nothing in the shape of literature." Nothing but pen, ink and paper should be supplied to the man in the transparent case. "And then let us see," said Lewis, "who will write original stories or articles. I'd back myself to turn out more copy in a given time, under these conditions, than any man in town. It's a fine idea, mind you," he added, the theatrical instinct and his sense of humour getting the upper hand. "A large hall—say the Agricultural Hall—might be hired after a preliminary show at the British Museum. A lot of people would pay good prices to see So-and-So and So-and-So struggling for ideas."

GODFREY TURNER'S "LILT."

Although the great man at the Lyceum was very good to Leopold Lewis, "the author of *The Bells*" (as he styled himself) began to show signs of "hard times," and one day Tinsley, in order to give him a fillip, offered to get out a novel of his. The "novel" proved to be a collection of

short stories which had been printed in various periodicals (mostly ephemeral). Some of these tales were very clever, but already they wore an archaic look. They appeared in their three-volume form under the title of "A Peal of Merry Bells." The critical papers did not take very kindly to the Peal; the bulk of them damned it either with faint praise or with no praise. Godfrey Turner was asked by Tinsley to give the book a "leg-up" in the *Telegraph*. Turner got hold of the three volumes in Catherine Street and turned over the leaves, humming a lively melody as was his wont when he was hurriedly reading this class of book with a view of writing an account of it.

"I don't know what the deuce I am going to write about this book," he said at length. "I'd like to say everything that's good about it both for Lewis's sake and Bill's" (the publisher), "but it's so infernally hard to know how to treat it. It's not like an ordinary novel or like an ordinary collection of tales. There's metal in it, but—Stop! That gives me an idea. I'll begin my review by saying" —he hummed it, and he beat time for it with his forefinger: "There's a ring of

sterling metal in 'A Peal of Merry Bells.' That will do splendidly, Downey," he added. "The rest of the review can take care of itself. I like the lilt of" (humming it again) "There's a ring of sterling metal in 'A Peal of Merry Bells.' Don't you?"

The notice in *The Daily Telegraph* opened with these words. It pleased the author mightily. He said to me: "Why, you can fit the first sentence to a tune." And he fitted it to some suitable snatch of an air, and used to go about the Strand chaunting it.

"PHIL" CALLAN.

Amongst the many "queer" characters who were regular visitors to the Strand in my Tinsley period, Mr. Philip Callan, M.P. for Dundalk, was not the least interesting. "Phil" Callan—a broad-shouldered, well-built, handsome man, wearing a carefully-trimmed black beard and a flaming red tie—was something of a Free Lance. Nominally he was a member of the Irish National party, but Parnell neither liked him nor trusted him. There was no love lost between the Irish Chief and the member for Dundalk—

in later years there was an open rupture and undisguised animosity.

Though I had many a conversation with Phil Callan, I cannot recall any talk concerning his attitude towards Parnell. (I knew something subsequently of the development of the inimical relations, but my information came from another source.) Phil, in the Strand, discoursed very rarely about politics; and when he did "talk shop," it was generally the humorous side of political life—or what he chose to consider the humorous side—that he discussed.

I am purposely giving political matters as wide a berth as possible in this volume, and in recalling tales told by Phil Callan I am not entering upon the domain of polemics.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

Callan was in the thick of a discussion once, about the venality of certain classes of voters, especially in the pre-ballot days. At that time, apparently, he held Dundalk in the hollow of his hands; but, as he explained to us, if he held Dundalk with one hand, he had to hold a purse in the other.

"It was astonishing," said he, "how

close a 'bribery agent' could get to the figures which would subsequently appear on the polling-sheet. I remember one hard-fought battle. I knew it would be a very tight squeeze. At the time I was pretty well drained. I had begged, borrowed or stolen all I could for the fight, and my resources were exhausted. The evening before the polling-day, I was sitting alone in my study, poring over account books and trying to discover if there was any hope of there being an error in the tot of my bank pass-book, or if there was any debtor of mine whose name I had chanced to forget. I was disturbed by a servant, who said that a strange gentleman wished to see me. The stranger was shown into my room. It was growing dark. I hadn't taken notice of the failing light, until I was disturbed, and I was about to have candles lit. 'Don't mind any light,' said the stranger. 'It's just as well you shouldn't know me too intimately.' I was unable to recognise the visitor, and this bothered me, for I thought I was acquainted with almost every man and woman in Dundalk.

"The stranger said he had come about the election. He took a book from his

pocket and asked me if I would compare notes with him. When I heard what he had to say, I knew he was making a pretty fair shot at things, and I admitted this. 'Now, I suppose I may take it that you want to win,' said he. 'I mean to win!' I said. 'At any cost?' 'At any reasonable cost.' 'Then,' said my visitor, 'it will take' (Callan named the sum, but I forget it) 'so many hundreds to capture the seat.' 'You mean that is what you have come about.' 'Pay me the sum I name, and the figures at to-morrow's poll—take them down—will be so and so. A very narrow shave, but I am talking by the card.' 'And what if I decline to be a party to this shocking villainy?' I asked, summoning up a brave show of virtuous indignation. 'Call it what you like,' said the stranger; 'hard words don't break any bones. Don't pay me, and the figures will be so and so. Not a great triumph for your opponent—but all the same, a win for him, and a defeat for you.'

"Now," continued Phil, "absurd as it may seem, if I had the money my visitor asked for, I would have planked it down without a moment's hesitation, although the

man was an utter stranger. Something was whispering in my ear, that he was a prophet—and a prophet of evil, too."

"'How long do you give me to consider this rascally matter?' I asked.

"'It's getting rather late,' said he; 'but I can give you an hour. If you consent to my terms, light three candles in the window here. If you don't think well of my offer, leave the window in darkness. I'll stand in sight of it in an hour's time.'

"My mysterious visitor walked away. I sat down at my desk again, and puzzled myself trying to think where or how I might raise the wind. It was about a toss-up whether I would go or not, if I was to believe my own figures or my judgment or my agents, but something told me that the stranger did hold the scales. Anyhow, I couldn't discover any way of raising so much money at such short notice. I tried to tell myself it would be money thrown away—thrown away dirtily too. I decided to take my chance. I lit no signal-fires.

"At the polls the figures were exactly as my visitor had given them to me. I was beaten by a short head."

"Did you ever discover who the mysterious stranger was?" someone asked.

"Never," said Phil. "I wouldn't be at all surprised if he was Old Nick."

A REMARKABLE LEDGER.

One of the causes which made Phil Callan a visitor to newspaper-land was—at least so it was alleged—that he had occasional tit-bits of political information to dispose of to London papers. Also, the *Freeman's Journal*—the organ of his party—had then (as it still has) its office in the Strand. At a time, when election talk was in the air, Callan told me—in his most amusing style—the way in which he used to "work" the County Louth.

"Of course you know," said he, "that nothing goes so far when you're canvassing voters, as a professed intimacy with each voter. I knew most of the good people of Dundalk, but when it came to contesting the County Louth, the increase of the area made matters difficult. My plan was to keep a private ledger, and to see that it was always posted up to date. I had it ruled off with narrow columns for Religion, Poor Law Valuation, Politics, Married or

Single, Age. Then a wide column for Remarks. In one way or another, I collected a mass of information about voters in town and country. My memory is a bit treacherous, and I was obliged to carry my ledger with me, when I went into the County on the war-path.

"I usually travelled on an outside car, and the book was always in the 'well' of the car. You know what a marvellous memory for places and people Irish jarveys have. Often I used to envy the fellows who piloted me round. 'Who lives down there?' I would say, pointing to a house. 'Martin Johnson, your honour. His place is called Tubberaheena.' I'd have my ledger out then and I'd open it at J. 'Johnson, Martin; Tubberaheena. Valuation, so and so. Age, so and so. Two sons and one daughter. A widower. Has a craze about top-dressing. Can't stand superphosphate.' 'Drive down there,' I'd say to the jarvey. 'Well, Martin, my poor fellow'—when I got hold of the man of the house—'how are you at all? I'll lay an even sixpence you don't know me.' 'I do not then, sir.' 'I'm Philip Callan of Dundalk, and though you forget me, I don't forget you, Martin. You

know what brings me here; but, indeed, I'm not going to ask your vote now, but to remind you that I'm alive. I hope the two boys and the girl are as strong as yourself.' You'd see Martin Johnson opening his eyes, and then we'd fall into a chat about family matters, and of course I'd drag in the superphosphate, and declare that in my private opinion artificial manures were the ruination of Ireland.*

"On again I'd travel, until I struck the next man. 'Ferguson, John. Age so and so. Valuation, so and so. Presbyterian. Married. Henpecked. No children. Difficult man. Feud between himself and his wife's people—the Kellys, of Grange (who are R.C.'s).' There, of course, I'd have to

* Many strange theories about the cause of Ireland's ills have been propounded. Giraldus Cambrensis considered that the custom of Fosterage was at the bottom of much of the mischief. ("If the Irish have any feelings of love or attachment," he writes, "it is all spent on their foster-children and foster-brothers.") More modern critics lay the blame upon Intermarriage, Celibacy, or Horse-Racing. Julian Hawthorne declares that the mildness of the climate is responsible for the "ruination." But one of the most ingenious postulates was that of Mr. James Delahunty (who represented my native city in the 'Seventies). This worthy M.P. informed the House of Commons that "the arrow which pierced the heart of Ireland was feathered with a One-pound Note." His panacea for the ills of the sister isle was the abolition of "the pound note." Pellegrini ("Ape") furnished *Vanity Fair* with a remarkable portrait of Delahunty, bearing the legend, "Currency."

get hold of the wife first, and then when I got a chance to have a private word with Ferguson, I'd drop a few nasty—of course cautious—remarks about the Kellys, and say a few nice things about sturdy Presbyterians in general.

"On again I'd go. 'Who lives there?' 'That's Mrs. Foy's place, Glenmere, your honour.' Out with the ledger again. 'Foy, Honoria. Widow. One son on farm with vote. Son Tom, in Dundalk at Watts and Thompson's grocery shop. Favourite boy this. Youngest son a Christian Brother. Only daughter going to be a nun. Religious R.C. family this. Mother rules the roost. Fond of her tea.' I was a great hand with widows. They seemed to take to me like a duck to the water, or a trout to a fly. 'Mrs. Foy, my dear lady,' pressing her hand. 'You know me. Phil Callan. Of course you do.' 'You're welcome, Mr. Callan.' 'I was taking a drive out in this direction, and I couldn't resist the temptation of giving you a call, and maybe I had a cup of tea at the back of my mind. How is the eldest boy?' 'He's strong, sir. Working out in the fields.' 'A good lad. A comfort to you, Mrs. Foy. But

will you let me say that my favourite is Tom. I never go into Watts and Thompson's place without thinking what a fine steady handsome fellow he is. I can tell you, old Watts has his eye on him, and if there's a partnership going, one of these fine days—well, I mustn't be saying too much. How is the Christian Brother, by the way?' 'He is only studying to be one, sir.' 'I know that of course. But 'twas made for it, he was. And the girl? Well, of course, you know best yourself, and if she had the vocation for the convent, sure there's no use in saying anything, but that it is thankful to Heaven you ought to be to have reared up such a decent family. Faith, Father So and So'—the parish priest—'thinks no small potatoes of the Foys of Glenmere—small blame to his reverence!'

"Man alive! when I had drunk a few cups of strong tea with the widow Foy, and had given her the benefit of my advice on sundry family affairs, why she'd ship the eldest son to the States if he didn't vote for me.

"The greatest trouble I used to have, canvassing, was with the fellows who would insist on prating about politics—a subject

which I did my best to avoid, though, of course, if my man was a confirmed politician I had to humour him. But the ledger, I assure you, was the thing. It was better than all the speeches that ever were hurled at the heads of the free and independent electors of the County Louth."*

"FLAT BURGLARY."

I heard an extraordinary tale of "Philip, on his way through the world"—not from himself but from a more excellent authority. When I heard the story I expressed incredulousness. My informant said: "Anyhow, it happened."

For the better understanding of this strange tale, I fear it will be necessary to say that Callan occasionally suffered from that want of pence which puzzles public men. He was a barrister and he had a private income; but his political work and his ambitions had led him away from the paths of the law, and his private financial resources were often unable to bear the strain which was put upon them.

* One of Our Bohemia to whom I related this story, suggested that we should endeavour to get hold of the ledger and "doctor" it. My friend averred that if the Guide was carefully re-arranged it might be safely calculated to produce "ructions."

At the time that Gladstone's Land Bill was on the road the Member for Dundalk happened to be suffering from an acute attack of temporary impecuniosity.

The then proprietor and editor of *The Freeman's Journal*—Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray—in addition to being one of the ablest of Mr. Parnell's band of parliamentarians, was the most enterprising of newspaper proprietors. It was rumoured in the House that he had said, casually, he would gladly give a hundred guineas—my memory says a hundred, but it may have been a higher number—for a synopsis of the Bill, so that he might print it in *The Freeman* on the morning of the day of its introduction to the House. Callan heard this and sought out Dwyer Grey and asked him if he would be as good as his word. Gray said he would of course be quite willing to pay the price, but on reflection he saw that the thing was impossible.

"You'll have it at *The Freeman* office in time to send all you want over your wire," said the Member for Dundalk.

Callan spent the afternoon endeavouring to discover who had the custody of the Bill. He found more difficulty than he had antici-

pated in getting on the right track; but at length matters were narrowed down to one man whom I will call A.

Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises, the honourable Member chartered a hansom and drove to A's residence. A was out, spending the evening at the house of a friend. Callan drove to this house and sent in his name, stating that he had urgent business with A. A came into the hall and invited Callan to join him in a private room. Phil rapidly declared that he was in desperate need and that A could save him from disaster. He asked to be allowed to have a peep at the Irish Land Bill. He would make some notes from the Bill and on his honour no man alive would ever learn where or how he had derived his information. The information was wanted for Ireland, and in all probability no one this side of the Channel would trouble his head about the matter at all.

Phil poured out his words in a torrent. A listened and smiled. The request was preposterous. No such thing had ever been done or ever would or could be done. . . . What about Mrs. Norton? . . . Oh, that was quite a different affair. Anyhow,

there was no use in discussing Mr. Callan's request.

The member for Dundalk saw that there was no loophole in the wall which confronted him, but his alertness and his hopes never for a moment deserted him. "Moreover," added A at the end of his smiling refusal, "I haven't the Bill." "But you might know the contents of it." A shook his head and stood up. He was becoming uneasy.

The pair went out into the hall. Phil enquired, as a matter of general information, what was the custom with regard to important Bills. A answered him vaguely. "I had an idea," said Callan, "that this Land Bill would naturally be in *your* personal custody and that you would trust to no safes or strong-boxes, but carry it about with you wherever you went." A smiled and declared that this was not the style. As a matter of fact the Bill in question was lying in a box not very far from the House. Mr. Callan declared he had lost all interest in the matter—he had given up the chase. He saw the difficulty in a new light, and, anyhow, the time had gone by when a sight of the document would have been of

any use to him. He repeated his statement that he thought A would carry the Bill with him. A said there wasn't much room for that class of document in an evening coat. "There is my overcoat," said he, pointing to it, "and neither does it look as if it harboured Irish Land Bills."

"You never know your luck," said Callan, boisterously, seizing the overcoat and plunging his hands into the pockets. He found what he wanted—a card-case—and as he laughingly ceased to search the coat he declared that he was thoroughly satisfied.

A was amused with the antics of the Member for Dundalk, and was quite off his guard when he was asked—as a matter of general information—who had the custody of a document like the Land Bill. "You never heard of him, and possibly never will hear of him—Mr. B."

Phil had heard of B, but he did not think it wise or necessary to admit the knowledge. He shook his head. He said good-night and drove off.

The Bill was in the neighbourhood of the House in B's room. The scent was becoming hot. And he had A's card-case.

After some enquiry he ascertained that B lived in chambers or a flat, not far removed from St. Stephen's. He drove to B's chambers. It was now near midnight. B was about to go to bed. Could see nobody. Phil had a card ready—A's card, "introducing Mr. Philip Callan upon urgent business." The Member for Dundalk was shown into B's room. The custodian of the Bill was having a whiskey-and-soda before retiring to bed. He heard Phil's tale—which was mainly a declaration that A could not *write* his request, but that he had for certain reasons consented to allow Mr. Callan to have a surreptitious peep at the Irish Land Bill.

B was sceptical. Never had heard of such a thing. Sorry he could not believe that A had sent any such message. Mr. Callan was tremulous with indignation at the idea of his word being doubted. In fact his indignation overcame him and he was on the verge of tears. Of course there was no use in troubling further about the infernal thing.

The pair dropped to some ordinary conversation, B puzzled and amused. As a matter of general information Callan asked

at length where would such a document be kept ?

" The Land Bill is securely locked in that box over there," said B, smilingly.

The weather was chilly. A fire burned in the grate. The Member for Dundalk, his natural politeness deserting him, stooped for the poker and gave the coals a prod. Then, with the poker in his uplifted hand, he said: " Don't be alarmed, and don't raise a row, or press a bell-knob, for if you attempt to do so, on my honour as an Irish gentleman, I will brain you with this poker."

Then Phil walked to the door and locked it. " Now," said he to the astonished and terrified B, " I am going to break open the box and have a peep at the Bill. I assure you I will not give you away. You can do as you like—inform your chief to-morrow what is going to happen now, or hold your tongue—just as you like. I am not even going to compromise you by asking you for the key of the box. I am going to smash the lock. I am sorry to say that I must demand that you will not move from where you are now sitting or make any noise. You know the penalty if you

do. I am a desperate man—make no mistake about this. My remedy is a desperate one, but it need not injure you."

Between one and two o'clock in the morning the synopsis of the Land Bill was presented at the London office of *The Freeman's Journal.*

This is the tale exactly as it was told to me. I cannot say whether it is true or false; but I can say that, in my opinion, if any man in the kingdom was capable of carrying out a venture so daring, that man was the late Philip Callan.

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER CHRONICLES OF CATHERINE STREET.

II.

JOHN HILL.

If any tiro came to London in the 'Eighties with the intention of setting the Thames on fire, that tiro was John Hill. He had an experience of two recognised Universities—Heidelberg and Oxford, and he had graduated in another university—the Quartier Latin. He was a good linguist; he had a wide acquaintance with the literature of England, Germany and France; he possessed a lively imagination, a marvellous memory, and a considerable fund of humour; he could write gracefully and incisively, and humorously; and his ambitions were high. He started his literary voyage with the inevitable volume of poems—a

JOHN HILL.

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small book, entited "Songs, by John Hill." This was launched in 1881. In the same year, he brought to the office of Tinsley Brothers, the manuscript of a novel, "Wild Rose." I considered "Wild Rose" to be a remarkably clever story—I still consider it to be so. Tinsley Brothers published it, and Hill poured out novels and tales after this with wonderful rapidity, but he never seemed "to get there." Possibly the strongest story he wrote was one entitled "Ninety Eight," but this belongs to a later period, and I am thinking of Hill only as I knew him in the Tinsley days. He was very tall—over six feet high—square-shouldered and full-chested, but curiously slim from the waist, downwards. His features were sharply cut, and he had adopted a manner which was quasi-theatrical. At a certain angle his face bore a strong resemblance to Sir Henry Irving's.

There were visitors who came occasionally, at frequent or infrequent intervals, to Catherine Street; there was a considerable group who arrived there regularly on Saturday afternoons; and there was another group who haunted the office. One of the most persistent of the "haunters" was

"Long John Hill"—whenever he was in town. If he were missing, it might be safely wagered that he was on the Continent.

Amongst his quickly-formed friendships was one with John Augustus O'Shea. In many things the two men were as far apart as the poles, but they had qualities and accomplishments in common. Each was a linguist; each had a love of strange adventure; each had a faculty of humour and a relish for fun, even when it was carried into the region of the practical joke.

A trick of introducing people under wrong names was one of O'Shea's "strong weaknesses," and, as a rule, he succeeded in "selling" his acquaintances. It was sometimes very disconcerting for the men who were wrongly labelled, and not unfrequently for the men who were deceived, when they happened to discover that they had been humbugged. An odd one of the wrongly-labelled class would enter into the joke, *con spirito*. I can recall an occasion upon which O'Shea came off only second best.

Hill, O'Shea and I started out for luncheon, one afternoon. O'Shea was twitting Hill about his lack of purpose. "There

you are," he said, "mooning about the Strand, when there is fortune and fame awaiting you, if you would only make use of your opportunities."

It was rather upsetting to Hill to be told that the opportunities to which O'Shea alluded were concerned with his resemblance to the master of the Lyceum Theatre.

"You might easily get something down on account of an engagement," said O'Shea, pursuing "the argument"; "or you might go touring, while your prototype was holiday-making; or you could run off with some stage-struck heiress; or you could order plays from budding dramatists, and borrow money from them." In fact, the possibilities, according to O'Shea, were almost endless. Hill took the chaff good-humouredly. We stood at the corner of Wellington Street, endeavouring to agree as to where we should have our luncheon. Suddenly O'Shea—who had a marvellous recollection for faces—tapped on the shoulder a burly man, who was plunging through the crowded Strand.

"Hallo——!" he exclaimed. "Where have you dropped from?"

The stout man halted, gazed at O'Shea

for a few moments stonily, and then a flash of recognition came into his eyes. "John Augustus O'Shea!" he cried, grasping his hand. "Well, I *am* glad to fall across you."

The stranger was a naval captain with whom O'Shea had foregathered, some years previously, in Cyprus. His ship was in Portsmouth and he had come up to London for the day, and was to be off to Portsmouth in the morning.

"Allow me to introduce my two friends," said O'Shea. He mentioned me by my own name, and then turning to John Hill, he said: "This is Henry Irving."

"What!" exclaimed the Captain. "Mr. Irving of the Lyceum Theatre," pointing, as he spoke, to the portico of the Lyceum.

"The identical same," said O'Shea

"I am delighted to have the pleasure of meeting you in this fashion, Mr. Irving," said the naval officer, enthusiastically.

I did not know what was going to happen next; and I was astounded when I heard Hill (who was himself the son of a naval officer) say, with a theatrical shake of his head, and a theatrical shake in his voice: "Very kind of you to say so, captain. Now, what do you think of joining us at luncheon?

I'll lay a wager you were hurrying in search of grub when my friend O'Shea grappled you."

"Well now, Mr. Irving," said the stranger, smiling, "you are quite right."

"You can't do better than join us. We are old habitues of the Strand, and will know where to find an appetising meal."

"It would give me the greatest pleasure, Mr. Irving," said the captain.

"Our friend O'Shea is writing a play for me," continued Hill, "and we could all discuss it together."

"Sure I shouldn't be in the way?" said the captain.

"Not a bit of it," said Hill, "In fact, it is almost providential that you should have turned up. We are concocting a sensational nautical drama, and our friend Mr. Downey has some knowledge of nautical affairs—but only at second hand. You will be the very man to set it right about companion-ladders and scuttle-butts, and starboard tacks, and other weird things of the sea."

"I shall be delighted, sir." said the skipper, cheerily, "to give you any information I may possess."

O'Shea was now struggling to hide a laugh of an explosive character. "Our worthy

John Augustus suffers a good deal latterly from some unpleasant form of spasms—malarial, I should think in their origin," explained Hill.

"Ah, indeed!" said the captain, a little indifferently. The tables were turned on O'Shea with a vengeance; he was now, in the eyes of his friend, overshadowed by the more important presence of the Lyceum lessee.

We went to a restaurant in the Strand, and there, during the feeding-time, the nautical drama was the chief topic. Hill never once smiled, but O'Shea had to leave the table frequently in order to deal with his spasms. A very wild drama was discussed with solemnity, and when the farce was nearly over, Hill said: "Perhaps, you would like to come and see our play, to-night, Captain —— ?"

"Nothing on earth would give me greater pleasure, Mr. Irving," said the naval officer, his face beaming.

Hill handed him an "order." "You can present this at the Box-office, and my manager, Mr. Joe Hurst, will make you comfortable; and if you would do me the favour of supping with me, after the play

is over, we could have another chat about our drama."

When the captain had left us at the corner of Wellington Street, on our homeward voyage, O'Shea said: "Oh Hill, you scoundrel, you're after ruining me. I thought the man, after exchanging a few words with us, would sheer off. Of course he will kick up a deuce of a shine at the Lyceum Box-office to-night—he has a peppery temper. I'll have to clear out of the country, for if he falls foul of me, he will have me hung from a yard-arm, or blown from the mouth of a gun."

"I'm sorry for the decent man, I must admit," said Hill; "but you would do it, you know. You won't be in such a hurry again to play a practical joke on me, I bet."

A LION-TAMER.

The O'Shea-Hill anecdote reminds me of another of a similar kind. The Irish Bohemian—one of O'Shea's pen-names—arrived one Sunday evening at the house of Richard Dowling. He was accompanied by a dapper, flashily-dressed little man. Dowling was at his desk, but O'Shea, being free of the house, had no scruple in disturbing him. He

declared he had brought a very interesting fellow in his train, the famous Lion-tamer, Blank. "Come downstairs," said he, "when you've finished your work. Don't question the man right off about lions. He is out of a job now; and like most professional men he doesn't care to be worried with 'shop."

Dowling was interested in out-of-the-way characters. He had heard tales of Blank's daring, and he thought that some interesting "copy" might be made out of a Lion-tamer.

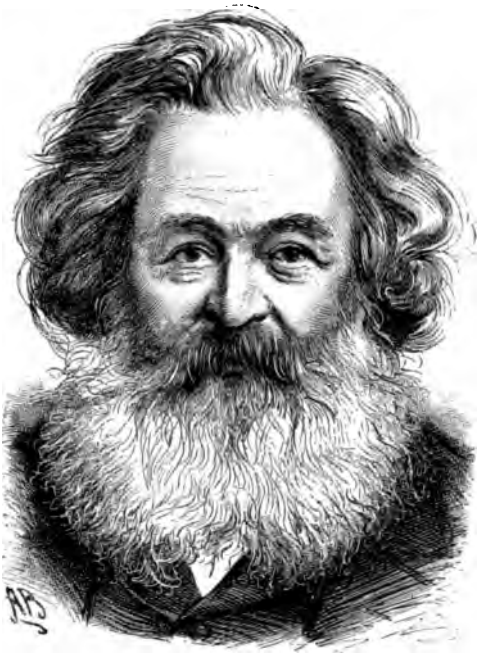
Mr. Blank proved to be a noisy guest. He insisted on singing snatches of comic songs, and it seemed impossible to "lure him on to" lions. Dowling grew weary of the little man's noise, and he determined to face him boldly. "Come!" said he. "Let us hear something about those lions!"

"Ssh!" muttered O'Shea. "I told you, Dick, that my friend doesn't like to talk shop."

"I don't mind in the least, Mr. O'Shea," exclaimed Blank; "I have no false pride. To tell you the truth, I have been itching for some time to talk shop."

"That's right," said Dowling. "Begin anywhere you like."

"Well, if you don't mind, sir," said the



G. L. M. STRAUSS.

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Lion-tamer, "I'd like to begin with yourself." Dowling darted a look of puzzled enquiry at him. "Now, I'd lay odds that it is three days since you had a razor on your chin."

"Very likely," said Dowling. "But I can't understand you."

"I'm interested in you, sir. You've treated me very handsome. Would you mind letting me run a razor over you? I'd take it as a great favour. It gets on my nerves, your chin does."

"What ails the man?" asked Dowling, appealing to O'Shea.

"I warned him not to speak of razors or to let the cat out of the bag. . . . He's my barber. I thought it wouldn't be a bad joke to pass him off on you as a Lion-tamer. I meant to do all the Lion talk for him; but he's after spoiling the whole thing with his infernal professional pride."

"THE OLD BOHEMIAN."

Doctor Gustave Louis Maurice Strauss* was one of the most interesting of the Elders who attached themselves to the Tinsley

* Though he dabbled in medicine, I understood he was not "qualified." His Doctor's degree was a German one—Doctor of Philosophy. He was a toxicologist, and one of his numerous nicknames was "The Poisoner's Friend."

Brotherhood. For a long time "the Doctor" had succeeded in flouting Old Age. At three score and ten he held scornful opinions of spectacles. He was, in fact, an elderly humorsome youngster.

Strauss was a wonderfully handsome man, with copious grey hair, a long, flowing grey beard, and brown eyes as alert as a hawk's.

He was a cosmopolitan; but his first best country ever was Bohemia. By birth he was a French Canadian; by descent he was German; France was beloved by him—he had been attached at one period to the French medical staff in Algeria. But his proudest boast was that he was one of the Conscript Fathers of the Savage Club. The Doctor wrote his autobiography—a marvellously interesting account of an amazing career—under the title of "The Reminiscences of an Old Bohemian." He was an occasional "Reader" for the firm of Tinsley, and a frequent contributor to Tinsleys' Magazine.

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION.

Doctor Strauss informed me that at one time, when he was the recognised "Reader"

for Tinsley Brothers, and for another firm, it was no uncommon thing for an incipient novelist to suggest that the Doctor might say some specially pleasant words about a M.S.—for a consideration. When such a case did arise, it was his Machiavellian custom to lead on the tempter and to induce him (or her) to put the matter into writing. And then the Doctor, armed with irrefutable evidence, would "go bald-headed" for the tempter. I must admit that, with one exception, I had no experience of this kind. The exception was, perhaps, amusing. An author (whom I never saw) offered, if I gave a favourable report of a manuscript submitted to Tinsley Brothers, to introduce me to a reigning Professional Beauty.

A "CUP" AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Dr. Strauss had two fads—cookery and some peculiar treatment of his own frame. At times he was remarkably corpulent, and when he felt that this corpulency was becoming serious he would "treat" himself with the most astonishing success. I have seen him with a "corporation" which would have made him noticeable at a gathering of Aldermen; and in a few weeks he would

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appear with a waist of which a dandy might reasonably be envious.

He wrote a cookery-book, which was too clever for the ordinary cook. Nevertheless, it was a sensible and informing work. He entitled it "Dishes and Drinks; or, Philosophy in the Kitchen." A portion of this work was devoted to recipes for strange and expensive "cups." The *Saturday Review* asserted that most of these cups were fit to be brewed and consumed only by "millionaires with copper-lined stomachs." The Doctor (who was always a temperate man) introduced me, in his own diggings, to one of these cups. It was palatable, and it seemed to be a very harmless compound. But when I got outside the Doctor's hall door I had an idea that there was something like an earthquake in progress. It was my first and last experience of occult "drinks."

Dr. Strauss wrote such a highly interesting account of his own strange adventures, that I feel I cannot do better than recommend to all and sundry, "The Reminiscences of an Old Bohemian."

The Doctor could, upon occasions, display a choleric temper, but the only hate he seemed to nourish was a hatred (or the memory of

a hatred) of Napoleon the Third. He was a devoted admirer of Louis Napoleon's conquerers. Two of his books are entitled respectively "The Makers of the German Empire" and "Emperor William."

"The old Doctor" was one of the most welcome of all the Bohemians who found an occasional haven in 8, Catherine Street.

HENRI VAN LAUN.

Another of the welcome Elders was Professor Henri Van Laun. He was a frequent visitor at Catherine Street. I think he put in an appearance every Saturday afternoon regularly. Van Laun was an admirable French scholar and an admirable English scholar. His translation of "Taine's History of English Literature," and his version of "Gil Blas," are probably the best examples of his work.

Van Laun occasionally dabbled in the shallow waters of reviewing. My friend, Byron Webber, published through Tinsley a very clever novel, and one Saturday morning there appeared in the *Spectator* a long and laudatory notice of the three volumes. The author was, naturally, gratified, and when he arrived on Saturday afternoon

at Catherine Street, Van Laun asked him if he liked his *Spectator* review. "Was it yours?" asked the novelist. He was possibly a trifle displeased at the idea of the review being the work of a "pal," who probably had said more than he meant. "Yes, my dear boy," said Van Laun. "I hope you will be fonder of me for the future." The novelist expressed his gratitude in suitable terms—indeed, he went so far as to say that, apart from the good fellowship which had actuated Van Laun, and the pleasure he felt at being praised by the *Spectator*, he considered the review to be (as it was) a capital piece of writing. A considerable quantity of good-natured gush was exchanged in the course of Saturday afternoon.

On Monday, Byron Webber appeared at Catherine Street. He was then looking for Van Laun with a view to gory proceedings. "Just think of all I said to him on Saturday!" he exclaimed bitterly. "When I went home, I found a letter from Julian Hawthorne—a short note saying: 'I hope my notice in the *Spectator* of "In Luck's Way" has not displeased you.'"

Webber did not imbrue his hands in Van Laun's blood; but when he met the

Professor some strong language was indulged in. (Van Laun was well able to take care of himself in the matter of vituperation. For a foreigner he had a most wonderful vocabulary.) His explanation—reduced to ordinary unadorned prose—was that he *had* sent in to the *Spectator* a review of the novel, that he had not read the review as it appeared in the paper, but he had presumed it was the one written by him.

Van Laun was a hard worker and, like a good many hard workers, he was an accomplished idler, when the lazy fit got hold of him. He had a curious trick of being one day in a self-laudatory mood, and of being another day in a self-depreciating mood. "Ah, Downey!" he would say to me on his "blue" days, his forefinger pressed flat against one side of his nostrils, "I am an old blackguard—a worthless old blackguard—a dirty, lazy, disreputable old blackguard." I never observed any trace of the imaginary dirtiness or blackguardism. He was a most interesting, good-natured Bohemian of the scholarly type.

FREDERICK FIELD WHITEHURST.

It would, perhaps, be hardly correct to

describe Mr. Frederick Field Whitehurst as a Bohemian; yet it is certain that no one who did not possess Bohemian proclivities, or who did not hanker after the dead-sea fruit of that country, remained constant to No. 8, Catherine Street. And Whitehurst was one of the recurring visitors.

He was the leading sporting light of the *Daily Telegraph*, and he was more or less intimate with the proprietors of that wonderful journal. He was the author of some interesting volumes of sporting sketches —"Tally ho!" "Harkaway!" etc.—published by Tinsley Brothers.

Whitehurst was a tall, distinguished-looking man. All over him was the air of the M. F. H., and one felt that, even in the Strand, his black coat was a hopeless sartorial error. His brother, Mr. Felix Whitehurst, had been for many years the Paris correspondent of the *Telegraph*, and had been *persona grata* at the Tuilleries in the days of the Second Empire. He furnished vivid pictures of "Court and Social Life Under Napoleon III."—the title of a work which was published at Catherine Street after his death.

QUICK WORK.

Fred Whitehurst was a delightful raconteur. I remember a few of his amusing yarns. He told me of a certain distinguished literary man, who called once upon a time at the *Daily Telegraph* office. Whitehurst was closetted with Mr. Levy, and when the visitor's card was presented, he was about to leave the room. "Don't go, Whitehurst," said the *Telegraph* proprietor. "This is ——, who of course has come to borrow money. If you remain, he will hardly have the impudence to ask for it. I have determined to be done with him, but he has such a plausible manner, that I feel limp in his hands." The distinguished literary man did some verbal skirmishing, gazing plaintively at spoil-sport Whitehurst. At last he plucked up courage, and boldly demanded a loan of a considerable sum. Levy shook his head, but the litterateur persisted, and eventually succeeded in getting the cheque, giving a promise "on honour" to repay the money in a few days. His pressing need (he asserted) was purely temporary. When the visitor had retired, Levy glanced somewhat shamefacedly at Whitehurst.

"He has got over me again," he said. "I was afraid he would. But there is one consolation—he will not have the courage to break a promise made on honour in your presence."

The distinguished literary man had a hansom cab at the door of the *Telegraph* office. He drove to the bank and cashed the cheque. And then—still employing the same cab—he drove to the Bankruptcy Court and filed his petition, scheduling the Levy loan amongst his unsecured liabilities.

BRUNEL'S BRIDGES.

Whitehurst had been *aide* to Brunel when the famous engineer was designing and constructing the Great Western Railway. Brunel had a passion for fresh and daring projects; he was happiest when he was skating over thin ice, or standing negligently at the edge of some (engineering) precipice. It was difficult to induce him to build two bridges alike.

Many an extraordinary structure still stands in the West of England to witness the boldness and the genius of its designer. On one occasion he decided to span a river with an iron (or stone) bridge of a single

span. The arch was so wide, and the bridge when completed looked so dangerous in the eyes of some of the directors of the Great Western, that Brunel was asked either to reconstruct or to strengthen his bridge. After some wrangling, he agreed to erect a wooden framework under the bridge, which would bear the weight of it. He pointed out that if his bridge showed any sign of defect the traffic passing over it would soon disclose the weakness, and if any weak spot was discovered, he would put up a new structure. Shortly after the timber support was put under the bridge, an unusually strong current swept away some of it. The directors heard the news of this accident with dismay, and called upon their engineer to explain how it was that he had put up a buttress of so fragile a character, and what damage the original bridge had sustained. Brunel laughingly told the directorate that he was perfectly confident of the strength of the bridge, that the wooden support was a mere "blind," and that no portion of the bridge had ever rested upon its supposed support.

AUTOMATIC SIGNALLING.

Another of Mr. Whitehurst's anecdotes was of a man who introduced to Brunel a plan for automatic signalling. The invention was so clever that it arrested his attention, and he was almost inclined to recommend it to the Great Western authorities. The inventor waited upon Brunel one day, in order to know the fate of his invention. "It is really a capital idea," said the great man, "and I was about to recommend its adoption on our system; but second thoughts sometimes are best, and I have decided against it." "Why, pray?" asked the inventor. "Well," answered Brunel, "accidents are bound to happen, and you can hang a signalman, but you can't hang a machine."

WILLIAM GILBERT.

Mr. William Gilbert was yet another of the Elders who had a weakness for Catherine Street, but he was wholly outside the pale of Bohemia-in-the-Strand. He was the author of divers queer books—historical romances, romances purporting to be "of real life," a virulent attack upon the Established Church, and an equally virulent on-

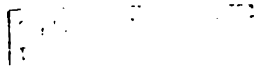
slaught against Drink. Probably his best known work was "Shirley Hall Asylum."

During my time at 8, Catherine Street Mr. Gilbert published from that address "The Memoirs of a Cynic." This was a work somewhat in the style of an autobiographical novel. I had an idea that it was founded upon his own career, but this was not so; possibly it adumbrated passages in his life. The queerest book he wrote was "Legion; or, The Modern Demoniac." The Demon is Drink, and the volume contains some remarkably eerie passages.

Mr. Gilbert was, when I knew him, a tall, erect, grey-haired, ruddy-cheeked man who always took his walks abroad armed with a heavy oak stick. He was a very charming old gentleman, but he owned a choleric temper. Mr. Tinsley told me Mr. Gilbert was once so wroth at an attack—as he considered it—made upon him in the *Saturday Review* that he determined to give the editor a hiding. He called at the office of the *Saturday*, and asked to see the Editor. In reply to an enquiry as to what the nature of his business was, Mr. Gilbert, allowing his temper to master him, replied: "To break every bone in the Editor's body.'

The chief of the *Saturday* sent a message through a clerk that he declined the thrashing—with thanks.

Mr. Gilbert was, naturally, interested in the successes of his famous son, Mr. W. S. Gilbert. But, talking to him one day on the subject of operatic performances (in which he took a keen delight), I found that he had not seen the current Gilbert-and-Sullivan opera—I think it was *Patience*. I expressed some surprise at this, and Mr. Gilbert said: "No, I have not seen it, and I'll tell you why. When the first performance was announced, I wrote to the Manager of the Savoy, enclosing a postal order for ten shillings, and asking that, as my hearing was not acute, he would endeavour to get me a seat in one of the early rows of the stalls. I mentioned that I was Mr. W. S. Gilbert's father. The reply I received was that the Manager regretted he could not give me a front seat, or any seat for the first night, and that he was returning my postal order, as the amount was incorrect, the price of a stall at the Savoy being ten-and-sixpence not ten shillings." I said, "I suppose this was a joke." "I hope I possess a sense of humour,"



STEPNIAK.

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said Mr. Gilbert, with anger in his voice and eyes; "but I fail to see the humour of this. If it was a joke, it was a very bad joke."

STEPNIAK.

In the Autumn of 1884 William Westall—with whom I enjoyed an uninterrupted friendship dating from 1880 to the day of his death in 1903—told me that he had invited Stepniak to England. The Russian revolutionist was sheltering himself at this time in Switzerland, but he was beginning to grow uneasy about his safety on any part of the European continent.

The day arrived when Stepniak was to land at Charing Cross, and Westall called at Catherine Street early, stating that he had an important engagement which would prevent him from meeting his friend on the Charing Cross platform. "I told him," said Westall, "that in case I missed him at the terminus he was to come on here. You can explain matters to him."

I was aware that Stepniak was a linguist—that he had already written books in various languages—his "Underground Russia" was written originally in Italian—but I under-

stood he did not know a single word of the English language. I felt I would find it awkward to explain why Westall had not met him at Charing Cross, as I could speak no language save English. (I have a reading knowledge of French, but my tongue fails me when I attempt to speak the French language.)

About midday, a tall, bulky, beetle-browed man entered Tinsley Brothers' office. I guessed him to be Stepniak, and I went forward to meet him.

"De Mistare Westall," he said.

I nodded, and as well as I could, in mangled French, I explained that Westall would arrive presently. Stepniak sat down, and I learned from him that he had found his way to Catherine Street by making an enquiry (in the simple words, "Catherine Street") of a policeman at Charing Cross.

When Westall arrived we were soon at ease, Stepniak explaining, with a peculiar smile which softened all his features, that my hand was the first hand he had grasped on English soil.

Stepniak and Westall were at this time engaged upon a work which was subsequently entitled, "Russia under the Tzars." It

was written mainly in French by Stepniak but Westall's share in the work was not confined to mere translation, and their joint names as authors appeared on the title page.

My connection with William Tinsley terminated abruptly in September 1884, and almost immediately after its termination Mr. Osbert Ward and I started the publishing firm of Ward and Downey. One of my first bargains was for Stepniak's new book. Messrs. Scribner, of New York, arranged with us to issue the work in the United States, and they asked that a special preface, suitable to the reading public in America, should be supplied by Stepniak. I wrote to Stepniak, asking him for this, and the next morning when I arrived at my office, I found the Russian in my room. I had not seen him since the day of his arrival in England, and I was surprised and relieved to find that he could speak a little English. After some discussion about the nature of the preface required for the American edition, Stepniak sat down at my desk and began to write. I fully expected that he would write in French, but when he handed me his manuscript sheets I found

he had written in English. . "I will get this into shape," I said.

"It will not be necessary to alter it," said Stepniak, smiling. "It can go to the press as it stands."

I found there was no occasion to alter a comma in Stepniak's MS. And six weeks previously he knew not a word of the English language!

G. A. HENTY.

I expect George Henty is now remembered only by his excellent tales for boys. But before he settled down as a writer of "boy stories," he had written some novels, and he was the author of two bulky books (published by Tinsley Brothers) in which were recounted his experiences as a war correspondent in Africa—"The March to Magdala" and "The March to Coomassie."

Henty was for a time one of the most regular of the callers at Catherine Street. He usually arrived (direct from the office of the *Standard*) about eleven o'clock, smoking his short, well-coloured, clay pipe. He was a burly man, with a good-humoured John Bullish sort of face. He was a model litterateur—a man of strong will and reasonable

ambitions, and a hard, steady worker. He told me, with pride, that he had lived upon sixteen shillings a week in London in his young days, and that he had suffered no privations, mental or physical, during that narrow period.

He had always a strong desire to found and to carry on a successful boys' paper. The failure of his penny weekly, *Union Jack*, was a blow to him. The success or failure of certain classes of papers—indeed, of nearly all classes of papers—is largely a matter of luck and opportunity, combined with editorial capacity; one would have thought that in Henty's hands a boys' paper was a dead certainty.

I was not long at 8, Catherine Street when I had the temerity to suggest to its conductor that as his Christmas Annual was always a successful publication, he might venture upon a Summer Annual. Henty wrote the first of these Summer numbers. It was a series of love tales, the scene of each being in some well-known holiday resort. Tinsley christened it "Sea-side Maidens." The author squirmed at the title, but he allowed it to remain.

Henty was the most Imperialist of all the

Imperialists I ever encountered. I remember well the day when the news of Majuba Hill reached London. Henty appeared at Catherine Street a little later than his usual hour. "Have you heard this awful news?" he asked me as he arrived in the office. And then the big man burst into tears. "The disgrace can never be wiped out," he blubbered. "Never! Never!"

He asked me once if I knew any young fellow of intelligence who would act as his amanuensis. He did not want a shorthand writer; he wanted a smart long-hand man. I happened to know the ideal youth, and Henty engaged him. He worked with him for about two years, taking down stories for boys at Henty's dictation. My young friend told me that Henty used to walk up and down his study, smoking the eternal clay pipe, and reeling off stories as fast as he (the amanuensis) could write. Sometimes the author would say: "I'll leave you to yourself for the day. Boil down the official report of the battle of So-and-So—or this passage out of So-and-So's book." The work after a time seemed to the amanuensis to be so mechanical and so easy, that he assured me he could go on

for at least a year writing automatically "Henty tales." I asked him to try how far the mechanism would go. He discovered that a chapter or two exhausted the powers of the machine minus Henty.

About the middle of the Eighties, Henty had an unpleasant quarrel with a brother journalist and I took sides against Henty. It so happened that I did not meet him again for some fifteen or sixteen years. I encountered him on the staircase of the Savage Club. "My dear boy," said he, "how glad I am to see you, after all these years! The sight of you brings back to me remembrances of many pleasant days in that dear old, funny old, office in Catherine Street."

CHAPTER V.

EDMUND O'DONOVAN.

THE MAN OF MERV.

I HAD heard a good deal of Edmund O'Donovan while he was prosecuting his researches in Central Asia. John Augustus O'Shea had included his name in a list of "Explorers I have Met," an article published in *Tinsleys' Magazine*, and he told me many a tale of the famous correspondent of the *Daily News*.

O'Donovan enjoyed a chequered career, concerning which I think it will be necessary to say a few words. He had studied medicine at Trinity College, Dublin (where his father, Dr. John O'Donovan, held the Gaelic chair); he had been an assistant librarian at Trinity College, Dublin; he had acted as *aide* to Sir Bernard Burke, the Ulster King-at-

EDMUND O'DONOVAN.

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Arms; and in 1865 or 1866 he had been quietly banished from his native country because of his connection with Fenianism or Fenian journalism. He went to America, where he enlarged his experience of journalism. During the years 1866–1870 he was to be found flitting between America and France. John Augustus O'Shea (in his "Leaves from the Life of a Special Correspondent") describes the O'Donovan of this period as "a sprightly young fellow . . . an adept in chemistry and military engineering. He could sketch, shoot, lecture, botanize, and sleep on a table . . . The study of Arabic was his passion while he was in the Rue des Fosses St. Victor." After Sedan, O'Donovan joined the Legion Etrangère. He was wounded at the battle of Orleans, was made prisoner, and was confined in a Bavarian fortress. In 1873, when the Carlists broke out, he went to Spain and wrote for *The Times* and *The Hour*. In 1876 the *Daily News* engaged him as a correspondent in Bosnia and Herzegovina when those kingdoms rebelled against Turkish rule. He represented the *Daily News* in Asia Minor during the continuance of the Russo-Turkish War, and

early in 1879 he started from Trebizond upon his famous exploring tour through Central Asia.

For some time he had cherished a hope of penetrating the country of the Grand Lama—a hope which remained with him almost to the end—but he abandoned the idea of exploring Tibet, and for about two years he wandered through Central Asia, and eventually he found his way to Merv. Here he was at first treated as a dangerous intruder, but in the course of a few months honours were thrust upon him. He was elected a member of the Triumvirate which ruled the Tekkés—and he became a kind of senior Khan. He soon grew weary of the Khanship, but he knew that he could not lightly escape from the burden. He is said to have smuggled a message out of Merv addressed to the Editor of the *Daily News*. This message was conveyed to Teheran and was telegraphed from the Persian capital. It ran: "For God's sake get me out of this." Before the British authorities could intervene, "His Excellency the Associate of Pomp and Majesty" (as he is styled in official Turcoman documents) managed to escape into Persia. He arrived at the shores of the Bosphorus in

November 1881, and he reached Constantinople towards the end of December.

I was delighted when my friend O'Shea told me that I might hope soon to behold the Man of Merv. As it turned out, I met O'Donovan Khan for the first time under very melancholy circumstances. Robert O'Shea (brother of John Augustus O'Shea), a distinguished journalist and an excellent fellow, died a few days before O'Donovan arrived in London. Richard Dowling and I went together to O'Shea's house in order to attend the funeral. When we arrived at the house we were shown into a room where a dark-haired, melancholy-looking man was seated. No name was mentioned. Dowling and I sat down; the stranger remained silent and immovable. In a few moments O'Shea entered the room. "Good gracious!" said he, "don't you fellows know each other? I had forgotten you hadn't met before. This is Ned O'Donovan."

The ex-Triumvir might easily have passed that morning for a professional mute. He had only just arrived in England then, and possibly the climate—it was very dull weather—as well as the funeral preparations,

affected his spirits. I experienced a small shock of disappointment as I gazed at the tall, handsome, listless man who had been a captive and a ruler in Merv.

Our dead friend was to be conveyed to a Roman Catholic church where Mass was to be celebrated, and I found myself in a coach with O'Donovan, Richard Dowling, and Edmund O'Leary. (They have all crossed the Borderland.) Shortly after starting out from the church we got to an iron railway-bridge which spanned the road, and as we drove under the bridge a heavy train came thundering overhead. O'Donovan, who, up to this, had exchanged scarcely a syllable with any of us, started violently and cried: "My God! What is that?" Richard Dowling, who was sitting alongside him, explained that it was a train.

"Of course," said O'Donovan. "You must excuse me. I haven't got accustomed yet to the noises of western civilization. But is it possible," he asked, "that such an infernal rattle has no effect on a horse?"

"No sound short of the last trump would affect a London-bred hack," explained Dowling. This seemed to tickle O'Donovan,

and the weary look vanished. His eyes flashed electrically, and almost without a word of preface he gave us a lurid account of the vicissitudes of a great funeral caravan which he had accompanied across the desert to Teheran. His narrative—a sufficiently ghastly one—was told with extraordinary vividness. Our coach journey was a long one. Before we reached the church O'Donovan had spun many a yarn of his adventures east of the Caspian. One story (which is told at length in his "Merv Oasis") may be given briefly here; it serves to illustrate the explorer's peculiar quality of humour.

He had been very anxious to inspect the great water-works outside Merv. His colleague, Baba Khan, offered to show him over the ground, and one morning, escorted by some fifty horsemen, they started to visit the great dam—the heart of the Merv Oasis. O'Donovan had taken several magnetic bearings during his journey with the help of a small prismatic compass. His companions (who were not wholly bereft of suspicions concerning the Ferenghi) thought the compass was a timepiece, and, on being questioned about his constant

anxiety to know the hour, he explained that the anxiety arose out of a desire to pray at frequent intervals.

"But," said Baba Khan, who was a most prayerful Turcoman, "you don't apparently say any prayers."

"Ah!" said O'Donovan to his brother Khan. "I am always praying. You of the Eastern plains snatch some moments from your occupations to offer up a prayer ostentatiously, whereas (remembering," explained O'Donovan, to us in the coach, "a sentence in my catechism) my life is a continual prayer."

We had now reached the church. "Unfortunately," added the Man of Merv, "it is so long since I indulged in the ordinary religious observances of my forefathers that one of you boys will have to keep close to me in the church and give me a nudge when to kneel down and when to stand up and when to bless myself. It is so long since I was at Mass that I almost forget the ceremony, and at best I'm infernally absent-minded."

I was told off to act as O'Donovan's prompter, but my services were not required. Indeed, to glance at his rapt, solemn

face, one might be pardoned for believing that his life *was* "a continual prayer."

When the funeral was over Richard Dowling suggested that we should all go back to O'Shea's house. John Augustus was horribly distressed at the loss of his brother, and Dowling—ever kind-hearted—thought that he might help to keep him from nourishing his grief if we went home with him and chatted with him as if no disaster had befallen him. At the same time, when we were seated in O'Shea's drawing-room, most of us, if not all of us, felt that it was rather ghastly to sit and talk as if nothing tragic had happened; and yet we knew that if we left the house O'Shea, fresh from his brother's grave, would be sure to break down utterly. I think it was O'Donovan who first plucked up courage to make a clean sweep of the barriers.

He was alert and communicative now. He told us further tales of his recent wanderings in Asia, and related with gusto some of his experiences as a ruler of Merv. His narrative was full of the most boisterous humour.

Anxious to keep O'Shea from brooding,

even for the moment, over his grief, Dowling declared that O'Donovan's yarns were all very fine, but that O'Shea could give him points. O'Donovan was quite willing to admit his inferiority, as a story-teller, to his host, and reminded O'Shea of some queer episodes during the Carlist War.

"I remember one remarkable story he told me when I knew him first," said Dowling, "of an incident in Spain. O'Donovan may not have heard it."

"O'Shea and I were on different sides, you know," said O'Donovan. "He was with those racketty Carlists who were in opposition, while I was attached to the Ministerial side, so, if you are intending to appeal to me for corroboration or contradiction of any of O'Shea's yarns, you see I am out of it. But what is this particular story of yours, John Augustus?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said O'Shea. "Dowling has an awkward memory. Let him tell it, and whatever he says I'll swear to."

"O'Shea was in Carthagena when it was beseiged," said Dowling, "and one day the Spanish fleet appeared in the offing, intending to demolish the forts. The Car-

lists were in sore straits at the time. Provisions were running short and ammunition was nearly exhausted. In fact, they could scrape together only one charge for their heaviest gun, so it was a very anxious matter to look after the loading and firing of that piece of cannon. When the gun was loaded the officer in charge of the fort where O'Shea had quartered himself naturally appealed to him for advice, and O'Shea suggested that this special shot should be fired slap at the Admiral's ship as soon as she came within range. When this happy moment arrived, bang went the cannon! Instead of striking the ship the shot struck the Admiral, catching the unfortunate gentleman about the belt. He was standing on the bridge of the ship directing the manœuvres of the fleet, and one half of him went clean over the side. This settled the besiegers, for no one had any idea what tactics the Admiral meant to pursue; and there and then the fleet turned tail and the siege of Carthagena was abandoned."

O'Shea joined in the laugh created by the recital of this historical sketch, and Dowling continued:

"The only thing wanting in the chronicle,"

said he, "is an account of what became of the other half of the Spanish Admiral."

"Strangely enough," said O'Donovan, "I can clear that matter up. I was in that very ship and on that very bridge with the Admiral when the shot was fired by O'Shea —bad luck to him!—I never knew before that he was the cause of the disaster. I caught hold of the other half—it was the lower half, as well as I recollect. I think I have somewhere amongst my trophies the telescope the Admiral carried that unfortunate morning."

We all affected to take O'Donovan's corroboration of the story seriously, and a discussion was raised about European revolutions and the small incidents that often turned the scale. O'Donovan was reminded of the fact that he was a pronounced revolutionist and he gaily admitted the charge. "I have a great contempt for crowned heads," said he, "although I have been myself a sort of despot. There is scarcely a country in Europe which I dare enter now, without incurring the chance of being charged with high treason. France, Italy, Austria, Spain and Germany—not to speak of my native land—are closed against me;

and on my way home this time I managed to shut myself out of Turkey for evermore. O'Shea knows about most of my European troubles, but as he doesn't know about Turkey I'll tell him how it happened. I arrived in Constantinople this time on my way home on Saturday. I had letters of introduction to the British Embassy, and for certain reasons I decided to present myself there the moment I arrived in Constantinople. Lord and Lady Dufferin were very kind to me and invited me to dine at the Embassy. They were anxious to hear about my Merv adventures, and I think I interested them in my account of what was happening in Merv and what was likely to happen there in the near future. Anyhow, when I left the Embassy, I was in high spirits and I strolled along until I came to a big *café*. I was feeling my way back to civilization again, and I saw the place was a cosmopolitan house of refreshment, so in I went. I listened for some time to the babel going on around me, and I soon became aware that there were several knots of mouthing conspirators in the place. Most of them were telling each other of the grievances they laboured under

and how eager they were to shake off the yoke of the tyrant. They were mostly a lot of blackguards with hardly an ounce of courage between them. Some devil possessed me, and I got up on a bench and harangued the crowd. I told them I had been the chief ornament of a Triumvirate and had seen the error of my ways, and that the only plan for emancipating Turkey was to get rid of the infernal tryant who mis-ruled the country. I suggested that the proper way to set about this holy work was not to sit mouthing in cafés, but to go out like men, storm the palace and cut the Sultan's head off.

"There was a terrible hub-bub, and, as luck would have it, I was arrested; and then I began to realize that it is mighty dangerous to make a stump speech in Turkeyland. Fortunately, I got an opportunity of scribbling a note to Lord Dufferin. I told him I had been arrested in a *café* as a conspirator and besought him to use his influence. I assured him I bore the Sultan no ill-will and begged him to remind his Majesty that until recently I had been myself one of the anointed. Lord Dufferin acted like a brick. I was afterwards told

that he had the wires at work to St. James' all day Sunday on my behalf. Anyhow, I was, for the time being, sunk fathoms deep in a fetid hole in the Bosphorus, amongst a frightful horde of malefactors—cut-throats and robbers of the lowest and dirtiest type—and I learned that out of that special part of my prison captives never emerged alive. Most likely I should make my final exit from the world tied up in a sack. I swore to myself that if I was spared I would never again take up the cudgels for a struggling people, or offer any advice as to the manner of dealing with tyrants. As a matter of fact I did not feel as if it were very likely I should ever have an opportunity of creating any further revolutions in the world, but I managed to buoy myself on the hope that Lord Dufferin would turn up trumps. A couple of terribly miserable days went by, and one blessed morning I was dragged up out of my underground hole and brought down to a jetty amid lines of Turkish troops. I don't think any other crowned head ever had such a send-off. I was rowed out to a British gun-boat. Eventually I was landed safe and sound at Marseilles. I understand that

if ever I am caught in Turkey again the police are instructed to have me bowstrung without benefit of clergy."

O'Donovan told us this tale with due gravity. His voice was most pleasant to hear; it was soft and plausible with the suggestion of a lisp. He seemed to regard life as a huge joke, and he tried to enjoy the joke.

On a subsequent occasion he continued the narrative of his Continental indiscretions.

"When I got to Paris," said he, "after my unlucky Turkish experience, I could not find any of my old Parisian chums. They were all either dead, or had, like myself, flitted from France. I had been expelled from France after the war for some political reason which I needn't go into now, but I felt little uneasiness on the score of being recognised. After some lonely wanderings in Paris, I lighted upon a journalistic chum, one H——, a fellow-countryman of ours. Like myself, H—— had been a bit wild, but he had now sown his wild oats and looked ridiculously respectable. We had a long talk over old

times and then we went out for a stroll. I am afraid I induced H—— to drink too many toasts to the welfare of the old land, and he was a man who didn't carry his liquor well. Anyhow, we found ourselves towards nightfall in the Champs Elyseés. There was a fete in full swing there, and we entered into all the fun of the fair. Whatever the devil possessed us to do it I don't know, but we both had brought out loaded revolvers in our pockets. After some ordinary hilarity we came across two large poles which had been supporting marquees, and, possessed by some arboreal instinct, I decided to climb to the top of one pole and I induced H—— to climb to the top of the other. This created some attention and a crowd gathered around us. Fired with excitement I shouted to H—— and drew out my revolver. H—— did the same and we gave each other a sort of royal salute by discharging the six bullets from each of our six-shooters into the air. Then we slid down the poles. The crowd in the Champs Elyseés was running helter-skelter, and I got into the thick of it as well as I could; but someone recognised me and pointed me out to a pair of gendarmes,

and I was ignominiously arrested. I protested my innocence as vehemently as I could, but it was of no avail. I was shut up in a cell, and the only thing I could congratulate myself upon was that poor H—— had got off scot-free. Next morning I was visited in my cell by a police inspector. I assured him with all the gravity the occasion demanded that I was a completely harmless and wholly virtuous man and that I had been most wrongly and wantonly arrested for creating a disturbance. I explained that I was a special correspondent of one of the most important daily papers in London and that I could produce satisfactory testimonials of my respectability and of my general high and harmless character. It was a monstrous thing, I protested, that I should have had to pass the night in a police cell. I looked supereminently sober and dignified, and I saw that I had made an impression on the police inspector.

"'Can you satisfy me,' said he, 'by written or oral testimony that you are the person that you describe yourself to be?'

"'Most certainly,' said I. Then I began to think that my name might turn up in

some accursed record—these French police have such devilishly long memories. I didn't know any of the *Daily News* men in Paris intimately enough to refer to them on such a delicate occasion as this, and I could only think of poor harmless H—— as a reference. I trusted that by the time the inspector could arrive at his diggings that my friend would have recovered from the effects of our little debauch, so I said: 'I can refer you to Monsieur H——. He is one of the most respectable and brilliant journalists in Paris.'

"'A countryman of yours,' said the inspector, 'judging by the name.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'but he has lived most of his life here.'

"'Of course you know him well!' said the inspector.

"'Certainly,' said I.

"'You can then describe him so that I cannot be mistaken, and I will interview him.'

"I described poor H—— to a hair. I gave his address, and began to feel that I was more than half-way out of an ugly scrape.

"'Would you mind stepping this way

with me?' said the inspector, politely, ushering me out of my cell and conducting me along a corridor. 'Perhaps we had better see your friend together,' he explained.

"'Certainly,' said I, now seeing myself almost a free man.

"Then, with a curious smile upon his face, the inspector opened a door of a cell and said, pointing to a man who was lying asleep on a pallet, 'This, I think, is your comrade, Monsieur H——. You have described him most accurately. He was arrested red-handed, the smoking revolver in his grasp.'

"I felt," said O'Donovan, "that the French police were too many guns for a simple Turcoman, so I capitulated upon the spot. Subsequently my old record was dug up and a good deal of influence had to be brought to bear on the authorities before I was banished for the second time from Gaul. If I am caught in Paris again I expect I shall be guillotined without the formality of judge and jury."

O'Donovan's "Merv Oasis," published in 1882, was the book of the season. He was inundated with applications for contributions

to magazines, and other periodicals, but he turned a deaf ear to all the applicants or put them off with pleasant promises. I do not remember any contributions of his to magazine literature during the period of his sojourn in England save an article in the *Cornhill* and one in *Tinsleys'*, the latter being an unfinished account of his experiences in Montenegro.

Concerning his procrastination, or rather his hatred of literary work when he was holiday-making, Mr. James Payn used to tell a tale. O'Donovan had promised to contribute an article to the *Cornhill*. Some time went by and neither the article nor O'Donovan put in an appearance at Waterloo Place. Mr. Payn jogged Mr. O'Donovan's memory through the post. Then for some weeks the life at the Reform Club of the author of "Lost Sir Massingberd" was broken up. As soon as he was busily engaged with his afternoon whist a message would come to him that a gentleman wished to see him in the hall on most important private business. When he would go out to interview the man he invariably found a stranger—always a different man, but each one possessing the same strong-flavoured accent.

"'I beg your pardon, Sir,' the stranger would say, 'but are you Mr. James Payn? Oh, you are. Well sir, I come from Mr. Edmund O'Donovan. He wishes you to know that he is writing that article as fast as ever he can.'"

The ex-Triumvir had his head-quarters during most of his period in Holborn, at an Irish inn which has since been demolished. He kept in his rooms a sort of private zoological gardens. He had an extraordinary love for animals and a most catholic taste. From Jamrach's and other emporiums he would convey in a cab to his lodgings, birds, beasts and reptiles. On one occasion O'Shea told me he called at the inn, and as he was about to enquire for O'Donovan a servant rushed up a stair-case and wildly addressed the proprietor: "If you please, sir," said she, "none of us can get into the kitchen. Mr. O'Donovan's large monkey has charge of it, and he is running about with a red-hot poker in his hand, jabbering like mad."

O'Donovan had another strange taste. He kept numberless secretaries. Whenever he met with a fellow-countryman who was in

difficulties he appointed him his secretary. He had plenty of money, and how could it be better employed than helping lame dogs over stiles? I met a few of his secretaries, but the real and ideal secretary was a man after O'Donovan's heart—Frank Power, or "Ghazi"* as he was almost invariably called by his acquaintances. Power had enjoyed a chequered career on the Dublin Press and had done some globe-trotting in his time. In Dublin he had the reputation of being the most charming liar in Leinster—which is saying a good deal. No one could ever tell how much or how little truth was mixed up in his narratives of personal perils, but his love of adventure and of ridiculous exploits was as strong as O'Donovan's. I remember once stopping at Ludgate Circus to watch a tall dervish dressed in snow-white garments who was exhibiting white rats to a gaping crowd. His attendant, a dusky Arab, was playing some peculiar instrument and collecting coppers from the crowd. After a few moments I had a strange feeling that the face of the dervish, notwithstanding the

* It will be remembered that Frank Power afterwards won distinction for himself at Khartoum, and that he died the death of a hero.

blackness of it, was familiar to me, and a nearer glance satisfied me that the performing Arabs were O'Donovan and Power.

On another occasion I was passing through the then narrow part of the Strand about mid-day and I noticed there was a great commotion on the flag-way. Pedestrians were flying into the road-way, terror on their faces. Then I saw O'Donovan, dressed as a Turcoman, tearing along at full speed. He had made a wager that he would "run amok" from the office of the *Freeman's Journal* in the Strand to Charing Cross. He won his wager, but I never could ascertain how he managed to deal with the police on this occasion.

After O'Donovan had left England for the last time I saw in a shop in Holywell Street a small coloured sketch by "Ghazi" Power, of "O'Donovan of Merv." The price was marked, as well as I can recollect, ten shillings. I had not sufficient money in my pocket to purchase the sketch, but I decided to acquire it the next time I passed through Holywell Street. But the sketch had disappeared when I went to buy it. This

little portrait is now in the possession of the Savage Club.

O'Donovan, in order to replenish his purse, went on a lecturing tour. It was, I understood, a highly successful tour, but money was only a nuisance to the ex-Triumvir. I met him after the conclusion of his lecturing expedition. He did not seem to care much for the worry it entailed and he was eager to be off again—as far away as could be from Western civilization. He told me only one tale of his troubles on the tour. He was to lecture in a Northern city under the auspices of the Mayor and I think of some local literary association. "An eminently respectable affair," said O'Donovan. "I was warned that I should have to be on my best behaviour. I was to be the Mayor's guest and I learned that his Worship was a professional teetotaller. I decided that I would show myself for the occasion as a man with a virulent hatred of strong drink, but fate was too much for me. The weather was bitterly cold. When I got into the train bound for —— I was badly in want of a good long sleep, so I told the guard to be sure to tumble me out

at my port of destination. I was due there about five in the afternoon. I was to dine at the Mayor's house and my lecture was to start at eight o'clock. The next thing I remember, after my arrangement with the guard, was waking up in the dark, positively frozen. I found I was at a station somewhere about the Orkney Islands. Fortunately there was a train bound South in the station which would bring me to —— about eight o'clock. I had just time to wire there before the train started South. I hadn't a flask with me and I had no time to get any sort of food or drink. The train I was in wasn't quite as far North as I thought, but wherever it was it didn't stop anywhere until it got to ——, and by this time I was almost congealed and I was faint from want of some kind of nourishment. At —— I was hauled hurriedly off the platform into the Mayor's carriage, and he said:

"Now, Mr. O'Donovan, we haven't a moment to lose. Already we are a few moments late and audiences here expect punctuality. I explained that I was absolutely dying for want of some refreshment, but the Mayor evidently thought that a

lecturer who complained of exhaustion was merely joking. But I had my weather-eye open, and the first blaze of light I saw from a gin palace I pulled the check string and the brougham stopped. The Mayor was horrified. He told me it would ruin him if his brougham was seen outside a pub.; but my life was of more consequence to me than the reputation of any Mayor in the kingdom, so in I went to the house of sin."

I noticed that O'Donovan in telling me this was suffering from some voice impediment. I asked him had he a cold? He said "Oh dear, No! but I haven't got accustomed to my teeth yet."

"Your teeth!" said I. "I thought you had a splendid collection of them."

"So I had when I saw you last," said he, "but I was looking at a horse one day and the brute—bad luck to him!—made a kick at me and caught me on the mouth. He loosened all my front teeth and they became an infernal nuisance, so I hauled them out myself one night, for I couldn't stand being poked at by a professional dentist. And then I found I couldn't get through this lecturing business without a set of front

teeth, so I had to put myself in the hands of a dentist after all!"

In connection with O'Donovan—though it is hardly part of his story—I may be pardoned for mentioning that at one time he was advertised as a candidate for Parliamentary honours—not that he sought them; the white toga was thrust upon him. The seat for Ennis was vacant, and it happened that John Augustus O'Shea was in Ireland. Some talk about the seat (which was practically in Parnell's gift) occurred one night at a newspaper office in Dublin, and one of the staff suggested to O'Shea that he might occupy his time in Ireland by canvassing the Ennis constituency. O'Shea entered into the humour of the thing, and being asked what sort of an address he would issue, he wrote one which, at first glance, looked sufficiently serious and solemn. Next morning the address, much to O'Shea's surprise, appeared in the columns of the leading Nationalist daily. It created some commotion in Irish political circles and some one (either in joke or in earnest) attacked O'Shea and declared he was not a serious politician. As a matter of fact O'Shea as a

politician was serious enough, but O'Shea the humorist generally got the upper hand. Anyhow, in a few days, there appeared in the same paper his valedictory address to the electors and non-electors of Ennis. I can quote only from memory, but I think my memory of the last few sentences in his farewell is fairly trustworthy.

"I have been called a carpet-bagger," wrote O'Shea. (Of course no one had called him anything of the kind, but what did that matter?) "The accusation is a foul one, and I hurl it back into the teeth of those who uttered it—teeth which are certainly false and probably not paid for. In order to heal all wounds, I resign in favour of my friend, Edmund O'Donovan, of Merv."

O'Donovan bade his comrades in Bohemia —about half a dozen of us—farewell at the Gaiety Restaurant the day before he finally set sail from England. He was not in very high spirits, but the pleasant smile was on his handsome face.

"I am ordered off to Tibet," said he. "I have always had a desire to explore the high plateaus of Tibet, and now that

I have got my wish I seem to have lost all interest in the job. I may never meet any of you boys again. I see my old friend O'Shea shaking that wise head of his. He would laugh right out if I declared that I have a presentiment of something going to go wrong."

"A liver, of course," said O'Shea. "It will take you many a long mile on horseback to shake your London liver into good working order."

"Do you know," persisted O'Donovan, "I have an uneasy feeling that this will be the last little go. Perhaps it is foolish to talk such rot, but I expect I shall get a box of a bullet in the back this time."

"Nonsense, O'Donovan!" said Richard Dowling. "You will, of course, succeed this time in dethroning the Grand Lama, and then we shall all feel proud in telling our friends that the Grand Lama of Tibet is 'one of ourselves'"

"No, Dowling," said he, rubbing the back of his hand to his spine, "that bullet or knife is fated to meet me here before I shall have a chance of upsetting the whole Bhuddist system."

"For goodness' sake," said Dowling,

" don't disgrace our country by taking knives or bullets in the back! Have them in the chest, if you *must* have them!"

" All right, my boy!" said he, grasping Dowling's hand. " I wouldn't break your word for anything. I'll have my wounds in front—just to please *you*."

After O'Donovan had said good-bye to us in the Strand, he went to a shooting and fencing gallery. He was an expert fencer and a dead shot. This evening—the evening of his last day in England—he devoted mainly to fencing and revolver practice. When it was time to leave the gallery he engaged a four-wheeler and set out for his lodgings. He was very tired and he fell fast asleep in the cab.

When the " growler " arrived at the house where O'Donovan lodged, the cabby got off his box and discovered that his fare was doubled up in a corner, asleep. He fancied he had lighted upon easy prey. The Man of Merv was aroused; he emerged slowly from the cab, found his latchkey and entered the hall, the cabby at his heels. Everyone in the house had retired to bed.

O'Donovan quickly realized that the man was under the impression he had encountered a "mug" or an "incapable." This amused him. He handed cabby his neat legal fare. "Wot's this 'ere?" asked the man, glancing with withering contempt at the coins on the palm of his hand. "Your fare," said O'Donovan." "It ain't no use, guv'nor—no sanguinary use." "And what do you propose to do," enquired O'Donovan, meekly, "if I assure you that it is all you will get?" "Wot do I propose to do? I'll kick up a bloomin' shine. I'll wake the whole bloomin' 'ouse—that's wot I'll do. Offerin' me a bob and a tanner for takin' a bloke like you in charge! Why, you ain't able to stand on your feet, *you* ain't!"

This was the finishing stroke. The Man of Merv, preserving his temper, said: "Clear out at once!" "You try and put me out," said cabby. "I have no intention of arguing with you," said O'Donovan, proceeding to mount the stairs, "but if you will take a friendly piece of advice you will clear out at once and close the door gently after you."

Cabby thought he had a very "rum party" to deal with. No doubt O'Donovan's

meekness encouraged him; and he called out after him in a loud voice, demanding an extra "arf a dollar." O'Donovan had reached the first landing. He turned suddenly round and, pointing to the hall door, said imperatively, "Clear out at once!" The cabman was in no humour to accept advice, and he made a move to mount the stairs. Instantly O'Donovan whipped a five-chambered revolver out of his pocket and said: "One, two, three!" Then he fired point-blank at the cabby's tall hat. The man was panic-stricken, and, instead of bolting, he plunged wildly about the hall, shouting for help. O'Donovan grew hilarious. "Keep steady, man!" he cried. "How the deuce do you expect a fellow who can't stand upon his feet to ventilate your hat properly if you go prancing about in that absurd fashion?" In a few moments he had sent five bullets whizzing through the cabman's hat.

Next morning, before the Court at Bow Street opened its hospitable doors to the public, the ex-Triumvir was brought before Mr. Flowers for a private audience. The cabby was there, exhibiting his shabby silk hat with its ten bullet holes. Sir J. Robin-

son, of the *Daily News*, was there, and, I think, Mr. James Payn.

O'Donovan explained, in his mildest and most winning manner, that the cabman had grossly insulted him and was threatening him with grave bodily injury, and the shooting was partly a mild form of protest and partly a harmless bit of a "lark." He had suffered no particular damage and he had run no risk. In fact, if the magistrate desired to be convinced about this last statement he (O'Donovan) was prepared to demonstrate the truth of it. If the cabby would put on his hat and stand at the far end of the room he would guarantee to put five further bullets clean through the original bullet holes, without hurting a hair of anybody's head.

This sporting offer was not accepted, but something in the nature of bail was. O'Donovan was allowed to leave the court under a friendly escort (after compensating the cabman for nerve shock), himself and his bailees undertaking that the wild Man of Merv would quit England *instanter*.

Next day O'Shea showed me a telegram he had received from St. Malo, announcing the arrival there of O'Donovan (of course,

under an assumed name). At Suez he was ordered to abandon the projected tour to Tibet and to join Hicks Pasha's Soudan expedition.

The words he had uttered lightly enough, when he was bidding us good-bye, came back to all of us when the news arrived of the disaster which befell Hicks Pasha's army. It was a long time before we could admit, even to ourselves, that Edmund O'Donovan—the brightest and bravest of Bohemians—was amongst those who were butchered at Kashgill.

CHAPTER VI.

A MAN WHO DID.

ONE of the ablest of the journalists who flourished in London during the 'Seventies, 'Eighties and 'Nineties was William Bernard Guinee. His name will, in all probability, recall the man only to his contemporaries on the press and to his friends. This is the pity of it, for if William Guinee had given fair play to his abilities he might have won an enduring name in the world of letters. But notoriety was abhorrent to him. Most of his press work—if not all of it—was anonymous. Had it been the fashion in his day to write under a name, I fancy that Guinee would have sheltered himself behind a *nom de guerre*.

Guinee started his career as a journalist in the office of the *Cork Examiner*. From Cork he migrated to Dublin, joining there

W. B. GUINEE.

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the staff of the *Freeman's Journal*. In the middle of the 'Seventies he folded his tent once more and flitted from Ireland. For about twenty years he was the London Correspondent of the *Irish Times*. He arrived in London determined to compel success. He did succeed, but he paid a heavy price. He sought no man's favour; he relied entirely upon himself, and he worked with an energy which was uncanny in its fierceness.

A man of his temperament naturally made but few friends; but when he did make a friend the fellowship was intimate and was built upon a rock. In Dublin he had known my cousin, Richard Dowling; he was, perhaps, the most valued contributor to *Ireland's Eye*, a weekly periodical edited by Dowling. The Dublin acquaintanceship became in London a fast friendship.

I remember my first meeting with Guinee. I was on my way to Ludgate Hill one Saturday afternoon, in the company of Dowling, and as we were passing through Holywell Street my cousin said to me: "Here comes Guinee." I saw a tall, lean, gaunt man—he was nearly six feet high—approaching with rapid stride. I was intro-

duced, and after a very brief talk, Guinee said to Dowling, "Can you join me this day week at the Temple Club? Bring your cousin with you."

As Dowling and I continued our journey he said to me: "You may regard yourself as being a specially favoured individual. I don't suppose there are half a dozen men in London to whom he issues his Saturday evening invitations." I then learned that for six days in the week Guinee was the hardest-working journalist in the kingdom. On Saturday it was his custom to take a solitary twenty-mile walk, and on Saturday evenings he usually asked a friend to his club or to a restaurant. I was informed that I was not to take Guinee as an ordinary mortal. If he chosed to recognize me when I chanced to meet him, I was to consider myself honoured; if he cut me I was to regard the cut as an indication that Guinee's thoughts were busy elsewhere.

The following Saturday Guinee entertained us at the Temple Club, and he certainly showed nothing of either brusqueness or absent-mindedness. He was geniality itself. He was an excellent talker, a keen humourist, and a man who displayed an

amazing knowledge of books men and affairs without a trace of pedantry or a suspicion of ostentation.

Ere long I found myself "on Guinee's list," and I had, moreover, the entrée at all times to his dingy, comfortless chambers in New Inn. I induced him to contribute to *Tinsleys' Magazine*. As well as I can remember the first of these contributions was a story entitled "Madam Morgue"; and about once a week he would take a peep into Tinsley's office on his way home from the *Globe* newspaper. Sometimes, too, I would encounter him, at hap-hazard, in the lobby of the House of Commons or in the gallery or in a corridor. (It was an easy matter to wander about the House of Commons up to about the middle of the 'Eighties). There were two Guinees—Guinee at work and Guinee when he had a breathing-space from "the grind." The breathing spaces were his Saturdays, and even on Saturdays I have occasionally found him busy. For twenty years he wrote regularly about twenty columns of newspaper matter every week. In addition to his regular work he took up special work during the time the House of Commons was sitting; and in other occasional ways he

probably wrote a couple of columns weekly. I would not be very far astray in putting down his total annual output at close upon two million words. And it must be borne in mind that his work was good work —there was never a trace of slovenliness— and that every syllable was written in his own microscopic "hand." No doubt many literary men have written forty thousand words in one week—I have done it myself—but I think it would be difficult to find one who wrote forty thousand words every week for one year, and I am confident that no man except W. B. Guinee ever succeeded in keeping up this terrific pace for twenty years. The mind of the average writer reels at the contemplation of this cataclysm of the written word.

Guinee's chambers were the second floor of No. 7, New Inn. They consisted of a bedroom, a living room and a room which was strewn with newspapers. This third room—utterly devoid of furniture—was a kind of Bluebeard chamber. It had a window, painted white and coated with dust, which overlooked the staircase. Guinee was too busy a man, and too reserved, to allow every visitor to disturb him. When he de-

sired to see who it was that was knocking at his door he would take a peep through a tiny patch in the window-paint of the empty room. On one occasion an intruder to whom he had frequently given work and money, and of whom he was heartily tired, knocked at the door of his room. Guinee was busy at his desk, but he stole into the Bluebeard chamber and saw that the visitor was an unwelcome one. As he turned to re-enter his living room a brick came crash through the window. Guinee could not tell if this missile was intended for his head (the visitor having discovered that the window was a place from which to espy strangers) or whether it was merely a notification that some one had called.

During the stirring times when Parnell was making things lively in the House and while Guinee was "working double-tides," he decided to write a novel. I spoke to William Tinsley about it and he offered no objection to the tale appearing as a serial in *Tinsleys' Magazine*. In common with most men who came into close contact with the London Correspondent of *The Irish Times*, Tinsley held a high opinion of his abilities. Richard Dowling warned Guinee that he was

undertaking a task which would prove to be irksome. How on earth could a man, he asked, burdened already with a load which would overwhelm any ordinary human being, carry the additional burden of a novel on his shoulders? Dowling's anxiety was two-fold: he was afraid of a physical breakdown, and he wanted Guinee to be seen at his best whenever he did enter boldly into the novel arena. But Guinee seemed to think that he could never have too much work to do; and his novel, "Talbot's Folly," started its career in *Tinsleys'*. The author was punctuality itself about "copy," and when he began to write to me asking for "a long day" I felt that something was wrong. One morning I went round to his chambers and when I got to his room he said: "I know I am a bad boy, but I didn't get away from the House until two o'clock this morning. I am screwing out the instalment now." While I was talking to him a note came from his friend Captain Hamber to say he wanted two leading articles for next day's *Morning Advertiser*. Guinee looked the picture of distress, but he uttered no word of complaint. I then discovered that he had not been in bed for the night, that after

getting back from the House he had tackled the novel. I implored him to abandon the story, to finish it up anyhow, and to wait until he could make up his mind to give himself more leisure. But arguments or entreaties were of no avail. The novel appeared throughout the year in the Magazine and it was subsequently published in three volumes. It could not help being clever, but it did scant justice to its author. He felt this himself, and when "Talbot's Folly" was concluded he assured me he would not again attempt to produce a novel until he could give his undivided attention to it.

Guinee's chief mental relaxation was his London Letter to the *Irish Times*. Nine-tenths of this was first-rate journalism—sound, quick, bright and true; but you were pretty sure to find occasionally a paragraph or a passage or a sentence in which the writer had given a free rein to his riotous imagination. I cannot remember a hundredth part of the "goaks" which were introduced into his London Letter. Only a few of them—they were of course ephemeral—occur to me. He invented the "champagne jelly," which had sustained Lord

Beaconsfield in his last days. . . An editor who had caused him grave annoyance, was, he learned, a rabid anti-Catholic, so one day a paragraph appeared in the London Correspondence of the *Irish Times* stating that amongst the distinguished converts who had gone over to Rome during the week was Tweedledum (the editor). This paragraph was copied into numerous London papers. Mr. Tweedledum was furious and telegraphed to the *Irish Times* to contradict the statement and to demand an apology. The *Irish Times* telegraphed to Guinee for explanations. He consulted a "Post Office Directory" and found there the entry of another man bearing the same name. He telegraphed that the real convert was Tweedledee. "But what would you have done," I asked innocently, "if the second man had also kicked up a row?" "I would have gone through the Post Office Directory," said Guinee, "until I found some creature named —— who would not be sufficiently thin-skinned to raise an objection to being converted by me. The original sting remains, for of course the correction will not appear in the London papers."

At a time when "slumming" was a

favourite pastime with the aristocracy, Guinee furnished some remarkable records. Commenting upon the ups and downs of human life one day in the *Irish Times* he told a little story of a man who was found in one of the recesses of London Bridge, on the point of starvation. He drew a pathetic picture of the condition and appearance of the starving wretch and wound up by saying that he was a famous Swiss nobleman whose name, for certain political reasons, was now suppressed. This little yarn was copied into a considerable number of London papers. Only one—an evening paper—observed that there was, unfortunately, no such entity as a Swiss nobleman, and that it might be well not to take for gospel the catchy news paragraphs which appeared now and again in the London Letter of the *Irish Times*.

I met Guinee a few days afterwards in his chambers, and I said something about his tarradiddles. "Ah!" said he, in a weary voice, "that kind of thing is very wrong. I admit it. But when I haven't any interesting news I must invent it. Besides, I don't write my *Irish Times* Letter for the public—you must always remember that;

I write it for Lady Arnott. Sir John" (the proprietor of the *Irish Times*) "tells me that she reads my Letter regularly and likes it. That's the only interest it has for me."

During the same year I happened to be travelling from Dublin to the South of Ireland. The compartment in which I was seated was occupied mainly by graziers from Kildare—well-to-do, plethoric personages. As the train started one of the graziers unfolded a copy of the *Irish Times*. A fellow-traveller said: "Faith, I'm ashamed of you—to see you reading that Tory paper. And you the hottest Nationalist in Leinster!" "Aisy, my good man!" said the possessor of the *Irish Times*. "The dickens a word of this paper I ever read except the London Letter, and I wouldn't miss that for all the other papers in Ireland." I told the tale to Guinee on my return to London, and it seemed to please him so well that I began to doubt the accuracy of the statement that his Letter was intended solely for Lady Arnott's perusal.

Only recently I was assured by an Irish cricketer that it was the descriptions of cricket matches—especially of the early Australian matches—in the *Irish Times*

which aroused young Ireland in the 'Eighties to an interest in England's national game. These descriptions, he told me, were the most vivid and interesting accounts of cricketing he had ever read. Guinee was the author of them, and it is quite possible (though upon this point I cannot speak with knowledge) that many of the most vivid pictures were painted by an artist who was viewing the scene as it unfolded itself to his imagination at No. 7, New Inn.

I remember the night of the passage of Gladstone's Irish Land Bill in 1881. I went to the House late in the evening, and while I was waiting to button-hole a Member, Guinee appeared in the outer lobby. He conducted me to the Press Gallery, and then he asked me if I would sup with him in the House. During supper I felt that on such a momentous occasion—while Lords and Commons were playing battledore-and-shuttlecock with the Bill—it was unfair that I should be occupying my friend's precious moments, and after some time I expressed my feelings. "Nonsense!" said he. "I'm going a bit of the way home with you, presently." I protested against this act of courtesy. "The Bill isn't through yet,"

said I; "and it will be a couple of hours, I suppose, before the House will rise." "What of that?" said Guinee. "Your *Irish Times* Letter." "Oh, I wrote that and sent it off long ago. I suppose they have put it into type in Dublin by this. Full and true account of the passing of the Land Bill." "And if a hitch occurs?" I enquired. "That can easily be settled. No hitch *will* occur, but if anything unexpected did happen, there is plenty of time to telegraph an alteration." We left the House together, and Guinee's detailed account of the proceedings which occurred after we left was true to the letter.

During his bachelor life it was his habit to live on the slenderest fare for six days in the week, but on Saturday, his only *dies festa*, he dined like a Roman Emperor, usually with a friend or two—seldom with more than two. His invitations to me were almost invariably contemporary with an invitation to Richard Dowling. Much as I coveted a night with Guinee, I used to look forward to the banquets with dismay. One had to eat, drink and smoke whatever the host put before you—and what is one man's meat is another man's poison. On the Sun-

day following a Guinee night I used to suffer unutterable woe.

Guinee made money. There wasn't in his composition a scrap of meanness—indeed in many ways he was absurdly generous—but he had a curious way of treating his savings. One who did not know him intimately might be pardoned for considering him to be a miser. I was once in his living-room when he took down a long purse—it looked like a stocking—from the top shelf of an open book-case. Into this he placed some gold and notes. "This is my Bank," he explained. "I put my money into this purse until I have sufficient to buy a Consol." "And aren't you afraid," I asked, "that someone will discover your unprotected Bank?" "There is no one knows anything of it but a friend or two. My old charwoman possibly is aware of its existence, but she is an honest old body." "She might be honest and still she might gossip about it," I urged. "I never lost anything here," said he, "and I'm not suspicious or uneasy." A few weeks later I was in the room again. It had one window which looked out upon an open space, and about a dozen feet below the window-sill there was the leaded roof of an out-

jutting room. "I had a nice experience the other night," said Guinee. "I came home in the small hours from the House. I was very weary and went to bed at once, but I couldn't sleep. It was a dark, gloomy, oppressive night. Anyhow, I couldn't rest. I got out of bed and came in here, clothed only in my night-shirt. The first thing I did was to go to the window. As I pressed my face against one of the panes I found I was staring into the eyes of a man at the other side. I got a nasty turn, but the unfortunate devil who was at the other side of the window got such a fright—I suppose I looked like a ghost in my night-shirt—that he dropped headlong on the leads below with a crash. He didn't give himself time to descend by the short ladder by which he had mounted to my window-sill. I heard nothing further of my visitor. I expect he got wind somehow of my Bank. I must change the venue."

Though he visited Ireland rarely he was an ardent lover of his native land and he kept his memory of it green. He was especially fond of Cork, and all through his busy life in London he never lost interest in his first newspaper office—that of the *Cork Ex-*

aminer. Many of his anecdotal memories of his native country would require a knowledge of the land to appreciate the humour of them thoroughly, and I fear I might only spoil them. But, even with this fear possessing me, I will venture upon two. The first deals with the vividness of the imagination of the young Corkagian. "The Dyke" referred to is Mardyke—a well-known suburb of the city. A jar of leeches was broken as it was being conveyed into the shop of an apothecary in the main street of Cork. There was consternation in the street when it was known that the leeches were sprinkling the flagway. The apothecary offered a small reward for any leech captured and restored to him. One of the leech-hunters —a small boy—entered the shop excitedly. "Dere's a fine fat one!" said he. "I circumvented him just as he was heading for de Dyke."

It may be necessary to state that it is fashionable in certain unfashionable quarters of Cork to pronounce the letters "th" as if they were "d" and the letter "e" as if it were "i." This was Guinee's version of a conversation occurring between a gentleman whose Christian name was Denis (shortened

in pronunciation to Din) and a woman who owned a husband also named Denis. The first Denis taps at the door of the second Denis and is answered from within by the wife.

"Is Din idin?"

"No, din. Din isn't idin, Din."*

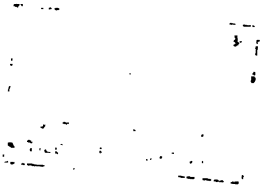
When Guinee was attached to the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin, he was sent to Galway to furnish a descriptive account of the famous Galway Election Petition—famous at least in Irish history. This was in 1872. Colonel Nolan had been elected Member for Galway and was unseated on petition on the grounds of having exercised intimidation through his agents. The hearing of the petition created considerable excitement in Ireland, for the alleged intimidators were the Roman Catholic clergy. When everything was at an end except the judgment, the Court retired and it was anticipated that Mr. Justice Keogh would devote many hours to the consideration of his summing-up. The reporters left the court, pleased with the prospect of a prolonged

* Perhaps this requires translation. Question and answer are :—
Is Din within?
No, then; Din isn't within, Din.

respite. Guinee, always a solitary man, remained in the courthouse, and after a very short time he was surprised to hear that the judge had returned to the bench. He was a highly unpopular justice in Ireland, holding, as he did, the reputation of being a traitor to the National cause. Guinee re-entered the court to find it almost deserted. There was no other "gentleman of the Press" visible. Guinee was an excellent shorthand-writer, and though he had abandoned the use of shorthand at an early stage he never lost his skill as a stenographer. Keogh commenced his speech, and it occurred to Guinee that possibly the judge's quick and unexpected return to the bench was a movement deliberately planned—that the absence of inconvenient reporters would give his lordship's friends the opportunity of denying (if necessary) the accuracy of any portion of his speech. Anyway, Guinee sharpened his pencil at both ends. The "sentence" was a wild and scathing attack upon the bishops and priests. "I took a venomous pleasure," said Guinee to me, recalling the incident, "in taking down every syllable uttered by Keogh. A more accurate version of a speech never appeared in print than my

version in the *Freeman*. It wore such a look upon its face, that if there had been any intention of denying words or phrases, I had cut that ground from under the feet of Billy Keogh."

There is a good deal more which I should like to say about my good friend, William Guinee, but my recollections in this volume are mainly of the period between 1879 and 1884. I can only add here that my comradeship with him was unclouded from the first day we met until the last day of his life—the first of September, 1901. Some months before his death I had a long letter from him which gave me no warning that the end was approaching. Towards the close of this letter he said: "But this" (referring to some incident concerned with his life in Buttevant Castle) "is one of the many things I hope to chat with you about before very long. It has done me good in many ways to write to you."



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CHAPTER VII.

WASHINGTON IRVING BISHOP.

At the beginning of the 'Eighties Washington Irving Bishop, a young American, came to this country and gave some startling exhibitions of pin-finding and thought-reading. In 1883 Mr. Henry Labouchere and Mr. Bishop fell foul of each other, the thought-reader denouncing *Truth*, and the editor of *Truth* describing the thought-reader as a "humbug." After a good deal of newspaper sparring the editor challenged Bishop.

"Mr. Bishop," said *Truth*, "is a citizen of a country where, when a person asserts his belief in being able to do something improbable, he is met with the practical reply: 'How many dollars do you believe in it?' I believe one thousand pounds that he cannot reveal by any process of thought-reading the number of a bank-note enclosed in an enve-

over, it would, he fancied, give him the laugh against his arch enemy. O'Shea was to edit the burlesque, and he and I were to supply a good deal of the "copy."

The project was discussed, Bishop eagerly endeavouring to persuade O'Shea to "take it on"; but keenly as O'Shea appreciated a joke, and much as he would sacrifice for one, he felt that this was a class of joke which would not well become a conspicuous member of the staff of the *Standard*.

While Bishop was trying to persuade us to undertake the task a few callers—non-journalistic—arrived, and the subject was dropped for the moment. Bishop was still in one of his most highly-strung moods. He was going to prove to the world that he was no charlatan, no conjuror, no humbug; and he was going to pull his traducers to the ground and roll them in the mire.

While he was pounding away I noticed that he was emphasising his remarks by lifting his curiously nervous hands slightly and bringing the palms down at intervals on the ivory handle of an umbrella which was leaning against the counter (alongside which he was standing). It occurred to me that he was so much wrapt up in himself

that he would be unconscious of any trivial proceedings on my part, and that it would be amusing to see what would happen if I could succeed in abstracting a thought-reader's umbrella.* I did succeed, and I hid the umbrella behind a door without attracting the attention of the thought-reader, who was still denouncing his detractors and recounting various exploits in the pin-finding line.

When Bishop felt he had exhausted the subject he bade us good-bye. As he was about to walk away he turned suddenly and said: "I think I had an umbrella when I came in here. Did any of you happen to notice if I had one?"

Incautiously I said: "It's rather odd for you of all men on earth to be making commonplace enquiries about lost umbrellas."

"Downey," said he, seizing the lapel of my coat, "you have taken my umbrella. You have hidden it. Come! Out with it!"

* Willie Wilde used to tell an amusing story of a lecturer's umbrella. Professor Stokes delivered a discourse on "Memory" at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. After the lecture the Professor bade a hurried good-bye to the Committee, leaving the members seated in the green-room of the theatre discussing the subject of the lecture. After a few minutes an attendant entered the room. "Beg pardon for disturbin' ye, gentlemen," said he, "but the Memory Man forgot his umbrella."

"Well, it's a good hit," I said—there were about half-a-dozen men present. "I did take it, and I did hide it. And now you must find it."

Bishop accepted the challenge with alacrity. He was blindfolded and he seized hold of me. I concentrated my thoughts on the hidden umbrella and gave its owner every reasonable chance to discover it through me, but he failed utterly. When he admitted that he was beaten I handed him his umbrella and he started off. In a few moments the others who were present at the unexpected *séance* went on their way.

At the ordinary luncheon hour—that is, between one and two o'clock—I was alone in 8, Catherine Street, and Bishop walked in.

"I knew I'd find you here alone," he said. "I'm very angry with you. What the deuce did you mean by playing such a trick on me to-day?"

"I couldn't help it," I said. "You were so boastful about your pin-finding and your thought-reading that the temptation overcame me."

"I can't make out how it was that I failed with you," he went on, "for I'd have chanced you any day as a likely subject, but I could

make nothing of you. However, I'm not going to let you think that I am a humbug, as *Truth* calls me. I was too much off my balance this morning to tackle a difficult subject."

"Well," said I, "you have a good chance of making yourself right now. We are alone here. You are going to guess at heavy risk the number of a bank note put into a sealed envelope. Try a similar experiment with me, without any risk. I'll write a number on a piece of paper and put it into an envelope, or any other place you like, and see if you can guess the number."

"I had such an absurd failure with you this morning that I'm chary of risking another. However, I'll take you on, if you'll promise to concentrate your thoughts upon the number. Don't bother about an envelope. Hide the piece of paper in a book."

There was a room behind us with a wooden partition, and it was arranged that while I was writing the number and concentrating my mind upon it, Bishop was to retire into this room.

I was very anxious to give him every chance and to see him succeed fairly. I

wrote the number on a piece of paper and folded the paper in two. I called out to Bishop that I had done so. He said:

"Yes, but, my dear boy, you are *not* concentrating your thoughts on the number. You are thinking of forty things. Sit down and give this a real good chance. Keep the paper in your hand, and call me when you feel you have that number fixed in your head and that all other thoughts are excluded."

After a few minutes I said: "Come along!"

Bishop emerged from the room and approached me. "Have you hidden the paper?" he asked. "The hiding of it is of no consequence, but I don't want you to think I could get a glimpse of it by any chance or dodge. I see the paper is still in your hand. Put it inside one of those novels alongside you. . . . Oh, look here!" he continued; "if I wanted to play a trick I could see what is written on the paper." He was now close to me. "Fold it up in several folds—like this." He closed his eyes, held out his hands, and touching the paper I held he folded it quickly into four folds. I put it instantly into the book, and then Bishop,

his eyes still closed, seized hold of my hands and held me tightly for many minutes, preserving silence. Then he retired into the back room and he called out the number.

"Is that right?" he asked.

"Right," I said. And he came back to me triumphantly.

"If you do as well at St. James's Hall," I said, "you will easily win that thousand pound wager." I stretched out my hand for the book in which I had placed the piece of paper and opening it quickly, in order to be assured that the number in my mind and the number guessed by Bishop was the same, I found I held a blank piece of paper.

"Oh, my good gentleman," said I. "Is this the game?"

Bishop laughed and said, "Well, with you it is."

"All right," said I, "this is the kind of thing your friend Labouchere ought to be told. Come, confess how you did it, and I'll let you off."

"A perfectly simple conjuring trick. I saw you were off your guard for the moment and I snatched my opportunity. When I asked you to fold the paper properly I palmed off another piece of paper on you—the piece

you have now in your hand. Here is the piece of paper you wrote your number on," taking it from his pocket.

"And is this how you do your pin-finding and thought-reading?"

"Emphatically, no!" he declared; "but when I come across a bad subject—I never met a worse one than you—I have to keep my eyes open for a chance to play an ordinary trick."

The *Truth* wager was a draw. Neither party would agree to the exact terms of the other; and while Bishop claimed a victory—having guessed the number of a bank note which Mr. Charles Russell (afterwards Lord Russell) put into an envelope—Mr. Labouchere contended that the whole thing was a mere piece of conjuring. I cannot tell whether it was or was not. I can only say that I have seen Bishop succeed in reading thoughts and discovering pins (or other articles). Though he did not succeed with me, a relative of mine could, and frequently did, succeed in pin-finding and number-reading experiments, using me as the medium. So I write (as the lawyers say) "without prejudice." Bishop claimed to have read the

thoughts of (amongst other great personages) King Edward VII., Lord Lytton, the Marquis of Dufferin, Sir Lyon Playfair, Lord Avebury, Professor Carpenter, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and to have had testimonials to this effect from them.

His own way of describing his "gift" was:—"I claim to be in possession of natural powers only, to produce effects by means of which those who prey on human credulity are wont to attribute to the supernatural. The subtle power possessed by me, as I am convinced it has been unconsciously possessed by hundreds of every generation, I look upon as Nature's special gift, as I regard a genius for poetry, music, or painting."

Bishop, shortly before he left England, told me the following strange story, making it a condition that I did not repeat it during his lifetime. I kept that condition. Whether, in telling me the story, he was humbugging me or not I am unable to say. He certainly told the tale in a convincing manner and he could have had no particular object in humbugging me—especially as he was "giving himself away."

He had been apprenticed, when quite a

youth, to some American thought-reader, whose name I cannot now recall. While he was still a very young man he decided to break away from his master and to start on his own account. There was a certain town in Western America which possessed a population given over largely to spiritualistic and kindred affairs. This town had a distinct reputation; and a spiritualistic medium or a thought-reader who could obtain a certificate from it might regard with equanimity his future career in the States as a medium or a mind-reader.

To this town young Bishop turned his eyes. If he could use it as a kicking-off place the goal was sure to be reached. Still he felt it was a dangerous experiment for an untried youth. But he had plenty of courage and plenty of confidence in himself. He arranged to give a thought-reading *séance*, or a series of *séances*, in the western town and he arranged to appear under the auspices of a society, which had for its president the mayor of the town. It was a long train journey from New York, and when Bishop arrived on the platform he was grievously disappointed to find no one awaiting him at the depot. The depot was distant more than

a mile from the town. He was the only person who alighted from the train. There was no conveyance visible, so there was nothing for it but to walk unheralded into the town. It had been snowing hard for some time previously, and it was still snowing, and the snow was thick upon the ground.

" I have a clear recollection of that solitary walk," said Bishop. " I was quite unnerved. It was understood that some members of the society under whose auspices I was to lecture would meet me at the depot, and it had been my intention to pump them as best I could and discover some facts or scraps of gossip about my audience. As I blundered along the road I struck a cemetery. ' This ought to be worth inspecting,' I thought. ' It is a new cemetery, and perhaps the tombstones may afford me some useful data ' ; so I clambered over the wall. Most of the tombstones were covered with snow, and I remember well hunting about for something to scrape the snow off with. I found a piece of board and tackled a few of the most imposing-looking monuments. One of them bore the name of a child, and the surname was a peculiar name, and the same name as that which belonged to the mayor of the

town. I regarded this as a distinct 'find.' It was not a surname which was common anywhere, and the size of the tomb marked it out as being one which belonged to a person of importance in the town. I made a note of the name and age of the child on my shirt cuff, and after picking up a few other names I got back on to the road and reached the town without meeting a solitary human being.

"I found my way to the hotel. I was fearfully tired and horribly disappointed at my reception. I had a wash and a good square meal, and then I went out into the hall of the hotel to make some enquiries at the bar.

"As I was speaking to the proprietor of the hotel half a dozen fellows came into the hall. One of them asked: 'Has Mr. Washington Irving Bishop arrived?' I answered that I was he. The man grasped me by the hand and apologised profusely for having missed me at the depot. His party had made a mistake as to the arrival hour of the train, and when they got to the depot they were informed that a solitary passenger had landed there and had gone slick towards the town. This occurred, of course, while I was looking after myself at the hotel.

" I was introduced to the members of the committee, and was delighted to find that one of them was my friend the Mayor.

" We had some drinks, and I learned that the Mayor was dead gone on spiritualism, and that his principal weakness just then lay in the line of messages from the other world. He chatted with me for a bit, and asked me would it be out of the way if I gave a little private *séance* for his special benefit. I explained that I was not very strong on spirit messages, but that of course I had the gift and was quite willing to give his worship the benefit of my services as far as they went. Anyway, I took him into a private room, and I asked him if a message on a slate would satisfy him. He said, 'Yes. Anything that would be correct and proper.' Of course, I guessed what sort of messages he wanted—about happiness and goodwill and all that kind of thing—and I set to work.

" 'The message I have,' I told him, 'is from a child of yours.' I scratched him off some good words on the slate, and then boldly signed the lines with the christian name which I had seen on the tombstone.

" He was greatly excited. I spelt out the messages for him and then I handed him

the slate. He looked intently at it for some minutes, and then to my horror he thundered out :

" ' You're an impostor—a damned impostor ! '

" I can tell you I felt pretty sick. No doubt there was another man of the same name in the town, and I had given messages from the wrong child. I saw visions in which I was being hooted and stoned, and generally I felt the game was up. But of course I wasn't going to let on that I had landed myself in a hideous trap. I faced the Mayor boldly, told him he was no better than he ought to be, and assumed an air of the most splendid indignation. The Mayor walked out of the room storming and roaring, ' Impostor ! ' at the top of his voice. The boys out in the hall looked pretty angry when they were told I was not what I had represented myself to be.

" ' This charlatan,' said the Mayor, ' agreed to give me messages from the dead. He pretended to give me messages from my child, and they were not from my child, for they were signed by a name which was not my child's. He is a rank impostor. He cannot be a medium or he would not be deceived by

the dead; and he cannot be a thought-reader, for if he had been he would have known the name of my child; it was in my mind all the time.'

"I reckoned I was in a pretty tight fix, and when the Mayor burst out of the hotel declaring that when I appeared on the platform he would get up and denounce me, I did not know what on earth to say to the other fellows in the hall. I could only put a bold front on, as I did, and insist that I was acting only as a medium, that I had not attempted to deceive anybody, and that if there was any error I was not to blame. One of the boys stuck to me and said their Mayor was a man who sometimes took the bit in his teeth and ran away with some crazy notion. Anyhow, the best thing to do was to wait for my public performance.

"I had privately made up my mind that there wouldn't be any public performance, and that the best thing for me to do was to discover quietly when the next train started for anywhere and to board that train. If I didn't get clean away, I stood a pretty fair chance of lying in the cemetery out of which I had built my hopes.

"I asked the boys to come to my room. A

drink couldn't hurt us and time-killing is sometimes a useful business. We could talk for a bit, and perhaps I might hit upon some plausible excuse to explain away the slip I had made, and prevent my new acquaintances from going out and organizing an expedition to put a few bullet holes in me.

" We chatted along for a goodish bit, and then I got a new fright when I beheld Mr. Mayor bursting into the room.

" Before I had time to think of any quick plan of self-defence the Mayor fell on his knees in front of me and kissed my hands reverently.

" ' Gentlemen,' said he, turning to his friends, ' I did this young man a grievous, a hideous wrong. I called him an impostor. Not alone is he not an impostor, but he is the greatest spiritualistic medium on this mortal earth.'

" I tried to look as if this was a sort of remark I was tired of hearing.

" ' You remember,' continued the Mayor, getting on to his feet, ' that I asked this greatly-gifted young man a short while ago for a message from the dead. That message came through him, and at the foot of it was signed a name which was not my child's

name. I went home vowing that I would do my best to ruin this young man, but all the time my mind would run on the message he had given me. When I got home I turned to my Bible, and opening it I found the name of my child—her baptismal name—entered on the fly-leaf. It was a name I had never called her by. I had utterly forgotten that it was hers. But here was he, a stranger—one who neither knew or could know anything of me—giving me a message from my child, reminding me of her real name—the name I had forgotten. Oh, it is truly wonderful!' said the Mayor, lifting his eyes to the ceiling.

"I had a send-off from that town, my boy, that was like nothing else of the kind on earth. I might have lived there to this day on the fat of the land if I had liked. Never let anyone tell me that tombstones lie!"

Washington Irving Bishop left England declaring that, "yielding to the suggestion of his dear friend Oliver Wendell Holmes, backed by the earnest desires of distinguished men of science in the New and Old Worlds," he was about to depart on a tour for the East. "If it be within human means," he wrote,

grandiloquently, " to solve many of the dread mysteries of the Orient, I hope under the shadow of Isis, of Vishnu, and Bramah to achieve some further success. I may chance upon some long-concealed human power worthy of the investigation of modern science, and some heretofore inexplicable mysteries may yield to patience."

Bishop was in very poor health when he set out from England, and very shortly after he arrived in the States there came the news of his death. It was said at the time that he had been vivisected—that the autopsy began while he was suffering from a cataleptic seizure. There was a grave medical scandal, but the matter was hushed up or explained away.

THOMAS PURNELL.

[*To face page* 191.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LOTUS-EATER.

"Tom" Purnell was one of the most remarkable men "on Fleet Street" during the 'Seventies and 'Eighties. He was indolent, erratic, eccentric, and (in his way) a genius. If his temperament had allowed him to settle himself down steadily and sincerely to work he might have done great things. A time came early in his literary career when he suffered bitter disappointment. Then he allowed indolence or carelessness to master him and he began to live, and continued to live, merely for the hour. He was no doubt naturally somewhat eccentric—most men of genius are—and he nourished his eccentricities to such an extent that eventually the mere reputation of being eccentric was the breath of his nostrils. Apart from this—

and when he could forget that he was mad (north-north-west)—he was a lovable man. He had a beautiful spirit, and a kinder gentleman did not tread the flag-ways of Fleet Street. His favourite author was Charles Lamb, and there was under Purnell's fiery exterior a good deal of the gracious humour which endeared Elia to his friends.

Purnell had come to London from his native Pembrokeshire full of great ambitions. He was then a remarkably handsome young man wearing a flowing black beard and possessing the most wonderful pair of eyes which ever shone in a man's face—great blue-grey eyes which could flash with scorn or sparkle with fun or pierce you with subtle enquiry.

When I met Purnell first he was middle-aged and grey-headed, but his wonderful luminous eyes remained, and his boyish, boisterous (indeed at times ridiculous) manner. Richard Dowling introduced me to him at the office of the *Hornet*, where Purnell was established as a kind of assistant editor under Major Featherstonehaugh, doing as little work and taking as much money as he could contrive.

I had heard much of Purnell; he had been

an intimate friend of Swinburne; he had known Monckton Milnes more or less intimately; he was the author of "Literature and its Professors"; and he had contributed in one fashion or another to almost every paper of importance in London. His principal mission—self-imposed—at the *Hornet* office seemed to be to make everyone uncomfortable. He pooh-poohed everybody and every scrap of manuscript or proof which came under his hand. In short he was THE *Hornet*.

He was an honest and outspoken hater of literary "bounders." It was an absolute treat to hear him castigate a pretentious writer or talker. After exposing the ignorance of the bumptious man he would lash him with scornful words. One generally knew when he was exhausted, for he usually wound up with: "Shall I tell you what should be done with you, sir. You should be pole-axed, sir!" He was not content with stinging the shams and the frauds or even his unoffending colleagues; he would goad the editor-proprietor, Featherstonehaugh, and the latter would frequently blaze out and threaten to heave Purnell bodily out of one of the second-floor win-

dows which lit up the *Hornet's* editorial nest.

There were several legends current in Fleet Street about Purnell: no one had ever seen him eat, and no one knew how or where (out of newspaper-land) he lived. Almost at any hour of the day or night or early morning, Tom Purnell might be found somewhere in Fleet Street or the Strand. The legend about his abstinence from food had something in it, for though he was a tall man he could not have weighed more than about eight stone. But he had a home, and a very comfortable home, into which he carried his eccentricities and to which only a few of his friends were admitted.

In the early 'Eighties he lived in the Kennington Park Road. His sister kept house for him. She was a very remarkable woman. She had read everything of value under the sun, and was about the only one who could set Tom in his place, and almost the only one for whom he had any abiding respect. Miss Purnell held a very good position in the Civil Service.

I had not known Purnell very long when he invited me to spend an evening at his house. After introducing me to his sister he

said he would conduct me over his "picture gallery." The "picture gallery" proved to be his bedroom. The walls were white-washed and were liberally decorated with posters, playbills, pictures illustrating soap and candles, or dead-wall portraits of actors and actresses or of scenes in lurid dramas. "This is what I call Art, sir," said Purnell in his high quick staccato voice. "Art with a large A. No affectation. No terror of Academy dons or of other critics."

When one recollects the style of pictures which at this period decorated hoardings one can fancy the appearance which his "picture gallery" wore. He told me it was a "corrective." He had been for some years during his early London career connected with the Art department at South Kensington, and I presume this was the way he was endeavouring to have his revenge.

After he had described in the most absurd fashion the various gems, he said: "Now, my boy, I will show you the finest, the most inspiring, view in all London. I gaze at it through the night and sometimes into the early morning. Be prepared!"

Then he blew out the candle and conducted me in the darkness to the window of his

bedroom. He drew up the linen blind, and pointing melodramatically with his right hand, he said: "Look! *There! There!*"

I looked through the window and saw a shadowy vision of a dome. For a moment I thought it might be the dome of St. Paul's.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Bedlam!" answered Tom Purnell, drawing down the blind.

I was not unprepared when we went down stairs to have a further display of absurdity. For a time, Miss Purnell, who was a very serious lady, kept her queer brother in order. But at length he broke out again.

"I must show some more of our treasures to young Downey," said he. "He has no idea of the wealth of rare, precious, priceless things which are hidden in this mansion." Miss Purnell tried to dissuade him from playing the fool further, but it was no use. Tom opened the doors of a cabinet and took out an old copper lamp. He handed me this, with one of his "Theres!"

"What is it," I asked.

"That," he said, "is the lamp which one of the foolish virgins took, and took no oil with her. Is not it wonderful that you or I should be handling that lamp? And now,"

he added, "here is a still more striking curiosity." He handed me a battered old silver coin. "There!" said he. "What do you think that is?" It is almost gratuitous to explain that this was one of the thirty pieces of silver.

Purnell disappeared at irregular intervals from his haunts in newspaper-land. When he did so it was safe to wager that he was paying a flying visit to the Low Countries. He was especially fond of Holland. I expect he used Dutch and Belgian picture galleries as a "corrective" for his bedroom collection. I remember once hearing him tell Richard Dowling that he was anxious to take a run across the Channel. Featherstonehaugh, who was present, lifted his head from a proof.

"Go, in heaven's name!"

"Haven't got the coin."

"Go and raise it!"

"Can't."

"The idea," said Featherstonehaugh, "of a man worrying about a means of getting off to Holland. Why, if I wanted to go, and hadn't money, I'd start a company in the City for prospecting the Low Countries and

go over there as a committee on behalf of the shareholders."

Purnell declared he had no gift for company-promoting.

"I think," said Dowling, "you told me not long ago that you were to the good with several publishers."

"So I am, sir. So I am, sir," said Purnell. "I'm to the good with A, with B, with C," mentioning the names of three important firms in the publishing world. "But what of that?"

"Why not go to B? you said you were twenty-five pounds to the good there."

"Dowling," said Purnell, "you will drive me mad. Do you hear him, Featherstonehaugh? He asks me to go to B because I'm twenty-five to the good with him. Why, I dodge up side streets when anything brings me into the neighbourhood of B's place."

"I don't think Dowling understands," said Featherstonehaugh. "Purnell means that he has had twenty-five pounds from B on account of a book of which he hasn't written a line and of which he is never likely to write a line. Isn't that so, Q?"*

* "Q" was one of Purnell's pen-names; he confined its use, I think, to the *Spectator* and *Athenæum*.

"That is it, of course, sir," said Purnell. "Being twenty-five to the good with a publisher means—must one begin to teach you the catechism?—it means, sir, that you have stuck him for twenty-five. What else on earth did you think it could mean? What else could it convey to any sane man in Fleet Street? Oh, what shall we do with these babes in Bohemia? What *shall* we do?" he cried, wringing his hands.

"For heaven's sake, go and do some work!" exclaimed Featherstonehaugh, closuring the conversation.

I asked Purnell if he had ever done a really hard steady week's work. "Once, once, sir. I was desperate—desperate. I took thirty pounds off the *Globe* that week. But never again, never again, sir! "Oh," he exclaimed shuddering, "its too terrible to think of it. Too terrible!"

When he was in the humour he would relate with gusto tales of extraordinary proceedings at the house of Monckton Milnes, but one would need to be a Rabelais or a Swift to do justice in cold print to these yarns. He used to tell tales also of fantastic "goings on" at the house of the Bagots

—the Bagots of the famous will case. These things occurred in his salad days when he and a famous poet were boon companions.

"Q" used to set up some extraordinary claims to renown—extraordinary for a man with his experiences and of his ability. After recounting to me narratives of literary "high" life which made my mouth water, he said: "One thing I pride myself upon, most of all, sir. I paid the last toll on Waterloo Bridge. I waited until midnight on October the fourth, eighteen hundred and seventy eight, at the gate, and the ultimate copper extracted by old Waterloo was my coin, sir." I believe this was so. The coin, I ascertained, was not part of the change of one of the thirty pieces.

The Purnells shifted their camp to the North of London, and I vividly remember one evening I spent with them. Morgan Evans was there, and, I think, "Ben" Williams—a Welsh County Court Judge. Purnell was in the habit of describing Morgan Evans as "the best writer of erotic poetry, after Swinburne; and the best critic of butter and cheese bar none." Morgan was a writer for the *Field*. I do not know if he re-

viewed butter and cheese, but he was an excellent authority on "the horse," and in his time he wrote some admirable verse. Morgan started a shilling magazine called the *Squire* in 1881 or 1882. But this is another story.

Shortly after I arrived at Purnell's, Captain L'Estrange* called, looking troubled.

L'Estrange had fought through the Kaffir war of 1852, and at the time I speak of had been about five and twenty years "on Fleet Street," and *mirabile dictu*, he was still unspotted. He was a gentle, good-hearted man—no one could help liking him—and it was sometimes difficult not to wonder at his guilelessness. His journalistic connection was principally with Red Lion House. He wrote novels and articles and occasionally he even went to the length of starting newspapers. He had written a book entitled "Under Fourteen Flags," which Tinsley Brothers had published. This book related the adventures not of a fictional hero, but of the very substantial hero of our acquaintance, Brigadier-General MacIver. The name of the Brigadier-General was on the title-page and the work was written in auto-

* My old friend died this year.

biographical fashion. MacIver, immediately after the publication of "Under Fourteen Flags," had set out for Australia, in order to deliver there a series of lectures upon the annexation of New Guinea. He had already marked on a map places in New Guinea which were to be called after him. One, I remember, was "MacIver Point,"—a place at which he hoped to land. This is perhaps by the way, but I think it is necessary to explain this much in order that "the situation" may be more readily realized.

"What's wrong, L'Estrange, old man?" asked Purnell. "You carry trouble in your face, sir."

"I *am* troubled, Tom," said L'Estrange; "and hearing that Downey was coming to see you this evening I thought I'd put my trouble before both of you."

"Fire ahead!" said Purnell.

So L'Estrange put on his spectacles and took a letter from his pocket. "This is from MacIver. His book will be the death of me. May I read what he says?"

"Certainly, sir," said Purnell.

The letter was read twice, and I have a pretty fair recollection of the contents. "Under Fourteen Flags" had been received

by the critics with some disrespect. Indeed, a few of them went so far as to chaff it and to hint that many of the adventures related by the author would put Munchausen to the blush.

MacIver forwarded a notice which had specially angered him. "My dear L'Estrange," he wrote, "I enclose a review of my book and I can only describe it as damnable. It has appeared in the Australian papers and is causing me serious damage. It is written by Justin Huntley McCarthy, I am told; and as an officer and a gentleman" (a favourite phrase of MacIver) "and moreover as a man of honour and as the writer of the book, there is only one course open to you. Call McCarthy out, on my account if you like, and shoot him. France or Belgium is very handy ground. See that this is done. If you funk it no man of courage and honour can continue to know you."

Purnell affected to take the General's letter very gravely, and he read the review which had angered MacIver.

"Very serious, sir," said he.

"You see it's this way, Tom," said L'Estrange. "I don't want to challenge Mr. McCarthy, or any other man; but MacIver

will tell everyone that I funked the matter, and I need hardly say that I am not that sort. Both of you know MacIver, and I have no doubt if he were in London at the moment that he would instantly call out Mr. McCarthy."

"Not a doubt of it," said Purnell.

"I hardly know what to do. I put myself into your hands and Downey's."

Purnell could no longer contain his risible emotions. The idea of L'Estrange receiving the fire of a critic, or of discharging the Brigadier-General's vicarious bullets, tickled him so much that he writhed with laughter. "There is only one thing to be done, sir," said he. "Let us all wait upon young McCarthy and pole-axe him. Pole-axe him, sir!"

It is almost unnecessary to add that Mr. McCarthy was not invited to fight with pistol, sword or pole-axe. I do not know if he wrote the amusing review, but if he did he is probably not aware of the extraneous amusement it created one evening under the roof of Tom Purnell.

One of Purnell's friends, or acquaintances, was Henry M. Stanley—"little Stanley"

as he always called him. "He's a countryman of mine, sir," he would say, "a Welshman—one Rowlands." He said to Richard Dowling one day—and Dowling declared it was the only time he ever heard an unpremeditatedly foolish sentence escape Tom's lips—"Little Stanley is proud of being a Welshman, but he doesn't want it to be known."

It was whispered that Purnell had a most wonderful novel "up his sleeve," but that no money would tempt him to hurry with it. When I came to know him intimately I found that he *had* a story in hand for years—more than a dozen years—but he was determined it should not see the light until he had polished it to the highest pitch of perfection. He showed me some of the manuscript one night in his house. He took it out of the cabinet which contained the lamp of the foolish virgin. He also produced from the same cabinet a bundle of letters from Charles Robert Newman (one of Cardinal Newman's brothers) who was a recluse in Pembrokeshire. These letters were written at odd intervals and dealt quaintly with all sorts of topics, literary, religious, scientific,

social. Purnell declared, on his honour as a critic, that they were among the greatest letters ever penned. He read snatches of them for me, but he recited in his wildest manner and the reading created upon me only very vague impressions. "Some day I shall edit them, and get them out under the title of 'The Letters of a Recluse,'" he said. "And then we shall see!" Their intended publication was announced some years later, and immediately after the appearance of the announcement the correspondence was purchased privately, and I was informed it was destroyed.

I published Purnell's novel in 1887. It was entitled "The Lady Drusilla." The opening chapters were very striking and full of promise. One of the incidents told of an eerie adventure in a cave on the Welsh coast—an adventure which I understand was an actual experience of the author. The middle of the book was too "psychological" for the average novel-reader, but the conclusion was sufficiently dramatic. "The Lady Drusilla" did not "catch on," and its comparative failure disheartened Purnell. He had written some chapters of another novel, to which he had given the title of

"The Second Violin," but he abandoned it.

I also published a volume of his essays, "Dust and Diamonds," but these were not much above the level of good average journalism, and they were far below the level of Purnell's conversation when he was at his best. One of the essays in "Dust and Diamonds" was called, "Who wrote Shakespeare?" Purnell's theory was that hosts of eager youths were flocking from the universities (in the days when the Bard was a theatrical manager) animated with a desire to administer to the national spirit that was abroad for dramatic performances. The theatres had stock pieces (historical and otherwise) which demanded constant attention in order to keep them up to the level of current public taste. "Try your hand on 'Richard the Third,'" would be the injunction of the manager.

I asked Purnell how much of this he believed, or was it all pure jest or pure wantonness? At the time a highly-successful series of melodramas was being performed at Drury Lane Theatre. They purported to be the composite work of Henry Pettit, Paul Merrit, and Augustus Harris. "Mine

is the only tenable theory," declared Purnell. "No one man wrote all Shakespeare's plays. Not Bacon. Not Shakespeare."

"And what did Shakespeare really do?" I asked.

"He was the Gus Harris of his period, sir," said Purnell, a twinkle in his mobile eyes.

Purnell had many a literary project to suggest. One of his proposals to me was that I should publish for him a paper which should be like nothing else on earth.

"My idea," he said, "is something about the size of a sheet of large letter paper. Everything beautiful. Beautiful paper. Beautiful printing. Beautiful matter. It should be got out not necessarily daily, nor weekly, nor with any regular interval, but whenever I had something to say worth saying, or when I could get other men to say something worth saying. Papers now are produced quite irrespective of the necessities of the situation: they are filled mechanically with so many columns of matter. My paper should be four pages or eight pages, or any number, so long as there was anything to say; and when there wasn't

anything worth saying, naturally the paper would not appear. It should be issued at an odd price—fi'pence or eightpence—something that would attract attention. It would be unique. Lots of people would buy it—would be looking forward to it—would treasure it when they got it. It's a great idea, sir," said Tom. And I have no doubt he thought it was, while he was speaking.

Travelling homewards through the Strand one morning about one o'clock Purnell saw a policeman handling a woman roughly. Without making enquiry as to the particular cause of the trouble, Purnell valiantly interfered on behalf of the distressed lady. The policeman did not enter into any arguments with Purnell; he simply took him in hand and gave him a violent shaking. Now, if there was anything which more than another would make Purnell furious it was to have a hand laid upon him. He was peculiarly sensitive in this respect. He had in his early life met with an accident which had cost him the loss of two fingers of his left hand—the scene of this accident, by the way, was Trinity College, Dublin—and he went about with a handkerchief airily

twisted round the damaged hand. The policeman gripped the hand which was *tabu*. After some wriggling Purnell escaped, taking with him a note of the constable's number. He returned immediately to the newspaper office which he had recently left and wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Police stating that in endeavouring to save a woman from being ill-used he had been assaulted in the Strand by Policeman Number So-and-So, and he was desirous of being informed by the Chief Commissioner if a man coming from his business might walk down the Strand at one o'clock in the morning, or thereabouts, without incurring the risk of being violently assaulted by the police. He asked for an immediate reply, as he did not propose to walk down the Strand again at the time named until he had the specific assurance in writing from the Chief Commissioner that he would be safe from assault.

No answer to this letter was at hand when Purnell arrived in the Strand next day, his rage, to all appearances, unabated. He decided upon a plan of campaign. He wrote almost the same letter from a different newspaper office—always selecting a newspaper

of importance—every day for about a week. Then he had a reply informing him that the matter was under consideration. This reply did not soothe the savage breast of Tom Purnell. He informed the Chief Commissioner (from another newspaper office) that the reply added insult to injury. What he wanted to know was—could he have the specific assurance in writing, etcetera? He continued this style of thing for about another week. Then an official from Scotland Yard called upon him, explaining that the matter really *was* under consideration. The only effect this had upon Purnell was to alter the form of the opening part of his letter. He did not ask, nor did he desire, visits from policemen. What he demanded was the specific assurance in writing from the Chief Commissioner of Police that he would be safe from assault at the hands of the police if he walked through the Strand at one o'clock in the morning or thereabouts. He did not propose to return to his ordinary duties until he had this assurance.

After he had written upwards of twenty letters—each from a different newspaper office—he was officially informed that the offending constable had been severely cen-

sured and had been removed to another district of London and that Mr. Purnell might be assured that he would be perfectly safe from assault at the hands of the police whenever he might choose to walk through the Strand.

This ended Purnell's holiday.

Tom Purnell suddenly grew very old. His breath came short, but he laughed at his breathing difficulty, and would thump his thin chest with his lean right hand and tell you that he meant to live for ages, that he was yet going "to do something." But the circle who knew him well—a circle which narrowed visibly every year—feared he was fading fast. His most faithful friend, Morgan Evans, came to me one morning to say that Tom wished to bid me good-bye. He was living then in a square near King's Cross. When I arrived at his house Miss Purnell told me he was sinking slowly and that I was not to excite him. Purnell and I talked quietly for some time—his voice was painfully weak—about all sorts and conditions of men and things. He was very much interested in Stanley, who was at that time lost in Equatorial Africa. "He'll

come through right enough," said Purnell. "I'll back little Stanley for all I'm worth." When I felt it was time to go he said good-bye to me. "Give my love to Dowling and to Guinee," he murmured, "and tell old Dowling to come up and say good-bye to me. Guinee is too busy, I know. They and old Morgan are about all I care for now. Tell Guinee not to work too hard. It's a fatal mistake." He smiled at this; and then, to my amazement, he sat up in bed, his cheeks and eyes glowing. "You must not go away with the impression that I'm faint-hearted. Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!" he cried, his voice coming with a crash which horrified me. He fell back in bed exhausted. Miss Purnell rushed upstairs. She gazed at me upbraidingly. I told her what had happened. "All my fault," murmured Purnell, holding out his hand to me. "Good-bye."

CHAPTER IX.

SOME THEATRICAL BOHEMIANS.

LIONEL BROUGH.

My first experience of an English actor of note off the stage was when I met Lionel Brough at 8, Catherine Street. At this period "Lal" Brough had ceased to dwell in Bohemia (outside Club-Bohemia), but he liked to revisit the old haunts. He took a keen interest in the doings of the firm of Tinsley Brothers. He had at one time been an *aide* at the office. He was very much attached to William Tinsley and Tinsley was very much attached to him.

I think it was at my first meeting with him that Brough related for my benefit some of his choicest Irish anecdotes. The yarns may, or may not, have been of the finest texture, but the actor's facial gestures and his Dublin

brogue were irresistible. His brogue was not the hideous "Irish" which is accepted by the average Englishman as "the genuine article." Brough told me he had in his more youthful days made a study of "the brogue" in Liverpool. It was by no means a refined order of accent, but it had the true ring in it and sufficient exaggeration to make it risible. No Irishman could listen to Brough and retain his gravity. In the endeavour to struggle with my convulsions of laughter I managed to bite my nether lip. I was bleeding somewhat freely when Harry Furniss entered the office. Brough—continuing to employ his side-splitting (and lip-splitting) brogue—explained my condition. Often, subsequently, when I met Furniss he would say: "Been bleeding at any of Brough's jokes since—Eh?"

FRED BELTON.

Number 8, Catherine Street, Strand, in addition to being the office of *Tinsley's Magazine*, and the headquarters of "Tinsley Brothers," was an asylum for lame ducks, literary and theatrical, especially theatrical. William Tinsley's admiration for the theatre did not stop at the play: it extended to the

players; and whether they were top-sawyers or understudies they were welcome—so long as they were amusing. Occasionally Mr. Tinsley encouraged the lame duck—it didn't matter whether he was literary or journalistic or theatrical—to contribute to his Magazine. He would (on his return from a Gaiety bar prowl) dig a manuscript out of the breast pocket or tail-pocket of his coat—or if it was a short MS.—a poem, for instance—out of his breeches-pocket and hand it to me. "Here, Downey," he would say, "try and stick this into the Mag. If you can use it, give the poor devil something for it—he's on his uppers."

More often than not the contribution was beneath contempt, but I was occasionally compelled by Mr. Tinsley to "find a corner" for the rubbish. He went even further than offering his magazine as an asylum. A lame duck would interest him for days or weeks, yarn-spinning. "Get your stuff together and write it down, and we'll see if we can't make a book out of it," he would say. As a rule, this was too gigantic a task for the "resting" actor, or the extra-lazy literary man, but there *were* actors and others who did fall in with Mr. Tinsley's suggestion and

who " stuck their stuff together " with a view to publication.

One of the first of these compilations with which I had to deal was Fred Belton's " Random Recollections of an Old Actor." Some of these recollections had appeared in a straggling form in a theatrical newspaper. I never saw Fred Belton on the stage, but I saw a good deal of him off the stage. He was a handsome old man, fearfully vain, but beamingly good-humoured. He rambled along pleasantly when he was speaking of the days that are no more, but when he sat at his desk and tried to turn his spoken words into written sentences—well, it gave one pause. And he resented any interference with his text. He had a small sense of humour; his book contains some anecdotes which evoke a smile. Belton was especially proud of two things—of having played before the Queen (" by special desire ") at Windsor, and of having been an intimate friend, in his youth, of Sims Reeves. Belton's chest would swell and his eyes would glow as he told you of his trips to Windsor Castle.

Belton (who fearlessly declared himself to be " the son of a Mayor ") drifted towards the footlights about 1830. Somewhere in the

neighbourhood of 1838—he was by no means precise about dates—he was engaged to appear at Newcastle-on-Tyne. "John Reeves," he writes, "was then at Newcastle, playing "little business," and occasionally "singing walking gentleman" at a salary of thirty-five shillings a week. Belton describes a scene at the theatre. Macready was enacting the part of Richelieu there, and during the fourth act of the play Reeves had to speak some lines. "He bungled through his part in his then careless way." This upset Macready, and as he was retiring he screamed out: "Call that man back!" Mr. Belton goes on to say that he fired up and bearded Macready. "That man is a gentleman," he said, "and our first singer." "I beg your pardon, sir," said the abashed tragedian, in an altered tone. From that moment dates the Hegira of Sims (or John) Reeves.

Belton, a little later, was asked by his manager to go and live with Mr. Reeves, as the latter was at that time in very low spirits, owing to the sudden death of his wife.

Other intimate and interesting references to the great singer will be found in Belton's "Recollections."

"Fred," said Reeves one day, "people say I have a fine tenor voice. It's all humbug. Mine is a baritone."

"This" (explains Belton) "may be asserted to be rank blasphemy, but it is true nevertheless, if I am to credit his own words" —thus impaling the unfortunate singer on the horns of a dilemma.

About the time that Belton's book appeared (in 1880), Tinsley Brothers were publishing a short "Life of Sims Reeves," written by Mr. Sutherland Edwards. Mr. Tinsley showed some proofs of Belton's book—or an early copy—to Mr. Edwards, and the result was that a slip was printed and inserted in the forefront of Belton's "Recollections." It ran thus: "*The Publishers of this volume are requested by Mr. Sims Reeves to state that the references it contains relative to him are for the most part incorrect.*" The original copy did not contain the words "for the most part." It stated simply that the references were incorrect.

Poor Fred Belton was in a sad way when he read this damaging slip. He protested vehemently—he usually declaimed in a sort of *Merchant of Venice* style—that every syllable he had written about his dear old

friend, John Reeves—as he called him—was gospel true. Throwing back the lapels of his coat and baring his waistcoat, he besought Tinsley to have mercy upon him; he implored him not to cut the pound of flesh out of his breast, etc. But Mr. Tinsley was inexorable.

"It's all very fine for you, Fred, old man," said the publisher; "but if there's any action to be taken it's at me they'll fire, not at you."

"William," said poor Belton, the tears streaming down his cheeks, "not alone will this damn the book—it will kill the author!"

Eventually a compromise was arrived at, and a suggestion of Belton's was accepted—namely, that the words "for the most part" should come after the words "relative to him." I think the preface is one of the most remarkable prefaces of its time.

F. B. CHATTERTON.

A more distinguished theatrical Bohemian was Mr. F. B. Chatterton, at one time the topmost sawyer in theatre management. I was formally introduced to the podgy, dapper, weak-eyed man one day. After he took his departure from No. 8, Catherine Street, Mr.

F. B. CHATTERTON.

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Tinsley said to me: "If Fred ever asks you for a half-sovereign, or a sovereign, let him have it right off—quietly, you know. It's only a loan. He'll pay when he has it." Often afterwards Chatterton would take a peep into William Tinsley's room. If Mr. Tinsley was not there, he would say to me, "Bill out?" If there was anyone else present he called again. If I was in sole occupation of the premises he would say; "Half will do," or "Let it be a whole one"; and in a few moments the transaction would be completed. Naturally after a time Chatterton and I became sufficiently well acquainted to chat about old times—his old times.* He told me the story of his connection with Edmund Falconer very humorously and spiritedly.

I remember how his eyes, which were normally weak, used to sparkle when he was telling of any of his numerous *coups*. I can recall the tale of "The O'Rourke" † as he told it.

"We were in partnership at the Lyceum.

* His zenith was in the 'Seventies.

† Falconer's name was Edmund O'Rourke. Tinsley Brothers published a small volume of his poems entitled "Murmurings." He died about the time I first met Chatterton—in 1879.

It was about twenty years ago. We had a piece on—some infernal French thing, translated by Falconer. Not doing much. Great difficulty about treasury. Each of us popped his watch regularly on a Friday, and was lucky to be able to get it out on Monday. Very narrow squeaks. Sometimes so narrow that I was anxious to cut the painter. But Falconer insisted that he had a play on the stocks that would pull us out of the mire. I knew he was likely to do the trick one day, but it was a very anxious time. The lease of the Lyceum was running out, and the thing was to get a new lease and shove the new piece on as soon as Falconer had it ready. Of course, a big fine was wanted by the lessors, and, as I tell you, we hadn't a ghost. I knew three or four capitalists who had a weakness for theatrical specs, so one day I made up my mind for a plunge. Called on No. 1 of these—he didn't know anything about the business of Numbers 2, 3, or 4. Nothing more than their names. Told him I wanted to get up a syndicate to acquire a new lease of the Lyceum. Big business. New play, and all that. Declared I had promises already from numbers 2, 3 and 4 to join syndicate. Must tell a good thumping

lie now and again if you want to get on in the financial line. Would he, Number 1, like to have a finger in the pie? He bit; and then I played off the rest one against the other. Of course, the game was easy after getting hold of my first man. When the thing was completed and we had got an arrangement fixed with solicitors and lessors, I went to Falconer to give him a prod about his new play. "Great spectacular play" was all I had been told about it. Couldn't find out what sort of stuff it was. All he would tell me was that he had picked the plot and characters out of a novel and that he was introducing scenes which were bound to carry an audience from the spectacular point of view. What was my horror when Falconer told me at length that his play was an Irish one! I nearly had a fit. I cursed and swore at him. Here I had been slaving and lying to keep the theatre together—and for what—for an Irish play? Who would go and see an Irish play? No one. No more than they'd read an Irish book.

"'Of course I knew all this well,' said Falconer. 'That's the reason I kept so dark about my play; but now that we are committed to the theatre the best thing is to

get out the new play and give it every chance. I feel it will go.'

"There was no help for it. As we got on with rehearsals I began to think that even though it *was* an Irish play it might catch on. Soon I found myself entering into the spirit of it—making suggestions here and there, and all that kind of thing. And at last we produced it—*The Peep o' Day*. Soon the Lyceum wasn't big enough to hold it. Had to take it to Drury Lane. Falconer had his revenge then. Used to jeer at me about Irish brogue and British bigots—and all that kind of thing. Anyhow at the end of the run of the piece Falconer and I divided twenty-four thousand pounds of profits between us."

There was another side to this rosy-tinted sketch of theatrical management. Chatterton was, I think, the promulgator of the famous theory that Shakespeare spelt ruin.* He told me that he had raised the curtain at Drury Lane Theatre—an operation which cost about £200 a night—on Rossi as Hamlet with less than ten pounds in the house.

* The letter in which occurred the phrase about Shakespeare spelling ruin and Byron bankruptcy bore Chatterton's name, but it was suggested that the man behind the phrase—if I may coin an expression—was Dion Boucicault.

For the benefit of those who knew Chatterton it is almost unnecessary to add that he was scrupulously exact about returning his borrowings to the halfpenny and at the first opportunity. Whenever he had a windfall or a benefit he would hand me at some convenient moment an envelope containing the small debit balance.

HAL LOUTHER.

Though he did occasionally want to be assisted over a stile, it would be unfair to his memory to imply that Hal Louther was a confirmed lame duck. During all the years of my acquaintance with him, though he was never in a flourishing condition, he never lost his engagement at the Lyceum Theatre. He was one of the theatrical folk who was induced by Mr. Tinsley to contribute to his magazine—not that Hal was at this time a literary tiro; he had been scribbling—verse and prose—for years.

Louther told me a very amusing tale of the visit of the Lyceum Company to Dublin in the year 1883. They travelled almost as luxuriously as Royalty; Dublin received them exultingly—horses were taken out of the carriages, wild human folk occupying the

space between the shafts and beyond them—bumper houses every night—public speeches by Henry Irving. In fact, according to Louther, Dublin must have presented the appearance somewhat of Delhi during the great Durbar. Anyhow, when the time for departure came, the company proceeded down the quays to the North Wall, still preserving the traditions of Oriental splendour.

"Tom Mead and I," said Louther, "watched the gorgeous procession as it passed over O'Connell Bridge, and then we hired a jaunting car and followed meekly in the rear. When we arrived at the North Wall, at the tail of the procession, and had paid our jarvey, we found ourselves standing close to two tramps—I think you call them 'corner boys' in Ireland. They had hardly a rag of clothes on them, neither had a hat, both were bare-footed and indeed bare-legged and they couldn't have had a bath for a considerable period. One of them—I don't know to the present moment, and I never will know, whether he was serious or jesting—was staring open-mouthedly at the embarking actors and actresses. I couldn't help contrasting the poor fellow's raggedness with the splendour of the players. And

then," continued Louther (who was fond of indulging in a certain theatrical style of rhetoric), "I pondered over his semi-naked independence and compared it mentally with the mock glory of our Lyceum pageantry; and I could hardly tell myself which was the least enviable.

"'Who are they at all?' gasped "the first corner-boy" at last, turning to his companion.

"'Arrah! don't you know?' said the companion. 'Sure that's the famous Henry Irving an' his company!'

"'And what are they at all?'

"'They're acthors—play-acthors.'

"'Praise be to God!' said "the first corner-boy," lifting his eyes to Heaven. 'What a terrible life to lade!'"

HAMILTON CLARKE.

Another member of the Lyceum group who used to frequent the Tinsley office was the musical conductor and composer, Hamilton Clarke. I think it was he who used to tell the tale of the *danseuses* who were engaged for the demoniacal scenes in *Faust*. When the ladies at rehearsal were conducting themselves a little frivolously the voice of

the ballet master was heard: "Now then, lidies, recollect you ain't dancing on 'ampstead 'eath; you're dancing in 'ell."

Clarke had always a seat for a friend in the orchestra. On one occasion he invited a denizen of the Strand, whom he met at 8, Catherine Street, to occupy the coveted chair. Mr. X., for some reason or other, fell asleep as the play proceeded. At the end of one of the acts Clarke tried to wake his guest, but could not succeed, so he decided to leave him in peaceful enjoyment of his slumber. X. awoke to find himself alone in the orchestra. Stretching out his hand his fingers touched a cornet.

For many years X. had been cursed with a feverish desire to play upon the cornet, but he had never been able to master the instrument. All he could do was to evoke from it the most hideous and appalling sounds. Here was an opportunity for practice—an opportunity which it would be sinful to lose. He grasped the cornet, and in a few moments that portion of the Lyceum audience which had not left the auditorium for the purpose of seeing a man, or of eating cloves, was electrified to hear from the orchestra the most astonishing music which had ever

vibrated under the roof of the staid Lyceum Theatre.

Hamilton Clarke was sought for and found. He rushed into the orchestra almost in a frenzy, and after a gallant struggle he succeeded in wresting the cornet from the playful hands of his guest.

SAM JOHNSON.

Sam Johnson was yet another of the Lyceum company who used to swell occasionally the Tinsley group. He might have written an account of the very interesting "stock company" at the "old Royal" in Dublin, but Sam's ways were not "littery." I have a vivid memory of Johnson when he was a leading member of the Royal Company. In the late 'Sixties and early 'Seventies he used to bring a "carefully selected" portion of it in the summer time to my native Waterford.

William Rignold introduced me one day in the Strand to old Sam. After some desultory talk I happened to say: "It's rather an odd thing; the first time I ever went to a theatre you two men played the principal parts."

"Is that so?" said Rignold. "Where, or when was it?"

"In Waterford," said I. "I was probably about ten years of age at the time. It was the *Colleen Bawn*. You," addressing myself to Rignold, "played Danny Mann, and you," turning to Johnson, "played Myles-na-Coppaleen."

"I assure you, sir," said Johnson, "that I want none of your damned reminiscences!" He hurled at me a melodramatic scowl, turned on his heel, and, like Box (or was it Cox?), "walked off in the opposite direction."

Rignold burst into a roar of laughter. "I quite forgot to warn you," he said, "that Sam is fearfully touchy about his age. He will live in terror of your dragging up some further recollections of your childhood. Try him next time with something which will put your grandfather and him into direct collision, and watch how he will take it."

CHARLES SULLIVAN.

Before I say anything about my dear old friend, Charles Sullivan, Prince of Irish theatrical Bohemians, I shall have to say a few words about myself. Early in the 'Eighties I wrote a four-act drama, founded on William Carleton's novel, "Fardorougha." Then I looked about me for a likely Irish

manager. I had a slight acquaintance with "Charlie Sullivan" in Ireland, and John Augustus O'Shea re-introduced me to him in London.

He was then playing—I think at the Adelphi—his favourite Conn the Shaughran. Sullivan promised to read my play, and eventually I placed the manuscript in his hands. Meantime he gave me the manuscript of a melodrama which he was anxious to have "put into shape" for him. He had bought this with the British rights from an American author. He explained what his requirements were.

"The dialogue is too slow," said he. "In writing stage dialogue a fellow should always make the speeches as short as possible—which this fellow has not done—and see that they cannon one off the other. D'ye mind me?"

I did my best with the play, and tried very hard to make the cannons, but I never heard another word about the melodrama. I think Sullivan put it on the shelf somewhere and forgot it.

Whenever he was in London I was sure of entertainment. He was full of honest fun, and his voice was a treat in itself. In the

story of "Fardorougha," Carleton makes his hero say in one place: "I'll curse you until your feet will scorch the ground you tread on." This sentence amused Sullivan and whenever I met him his first words were: "Don't hurl 'Fardorougha's' curse against one, Downey. My feet are blistered enough as it is. I'll produce the play the first chance I have. To tell you the truth, I'm too lazy to study a new part, but I'll shake the laziness off."

One evening he asked me to visit a certain theatre where a new "Peruvian" * drama was being produced.

"And what about my own Peruvian play, you scoundrel?" I asked.

"I'm only waiting to get hold of Shiel Barry," said he. "The title part is for him, not for me. But he's nearly as lazy as myself. But come and see this play. I know what it's all about, and I'm inclined to try it, for there isn't much study in it. But there's a point which I'm uneasy about, and the play turns on this very point. What I want you to tell me is, do you think I might take it round your native Munster without

* He usually described Irishmen and Irish things as "Peruvians."

having my head opened with a paving-stone ? "

I was rather uneasy about offering an opinion to an actor-manager about a new play. I sat alongside Sullivan in the theatre, and I felt there was no money in the drama, quite apart from any question of the riskiness of a certain situation. I confided this opinion to him.

" Well, do you know," said he, " I'm inclined to differ with you. I could see myself knocking that play into shape and making it go with a bang. But I'm still a trifle uneasy about it. I'm to have a discourse with the author after the curtain falls."

I was present at this " discourse." The dramatist was feverishly eager to make a bargain with Charlie. In order to brighten the conversation, and to put Sullivan into extra good humour, he proceeded to tell him some very risky stories (risky is perhaps euphemistic). Sullivan listened to the dramatist's anecdotes for some time, and the interview ended with a promise from Sullivan to write to the author.

" Oh, Downey," said he, plaintively, when we were out of earshot of the playwright,

" do you know where the very nearest place is that we could get a dhrink ? I'll die in the street of suffocation if I can't get something strong to wash that fellow's dirt out of my mouth. The echo of his stories seems to be choking me. Oh, what did he take us for at all ? Or how did I keep my tongue off him ? I wouldn't touch a play of his with a forty-foot pole if there was a diamond thrown in with it."

The next time I heard of Sullivan it was to be told the bad news that his wife had died of blood-poisoning. A rusty needle had pierced her finger. Her death was a terrible blow to poor Charlie.

He was in London some time afterwards playing in a round of Irish dramas at the Grand Theatre, Islington. He asked my wife and myself to go and see his Shaughran.

" I'll meet you at the theatre," said he, " before the show begins, and we can have a bit of supper after all is over."

Miscalculating the time occupied in getting from South London to Islington we did not arrive in the theatre until after the curtain had gone up.

The Shaughran did not manage to pick us

out in the theatre until the wake scene. As he was lying in his bier he caught sight of me for the first time, and for the moment, forgetting that he was a corpse—or pretending to be one—he spoilt the scene by beckoning at me eagerly with one hand—a summons that imperatively said, "Come round!"

"Begor, I'll never forgive that husband of yours, Mrs. Downey," said he later. "I forgot myself when I caught sight of him. But he knows how I'll have my revenge. . . . Downey," he added, in a tragic voice and with a leading villain gesture. "I'll curse you for being late until the soles of your feet will scorch the ground you thread on. . . . Don't be unaisy, ma'am. My bark is worse than my bite."

The last time I met him was one Sunday afternoon. He wrote to me asking me to call at a private hotel off the Strand, where he was stopping. He told me he had made up his mind at last to give *Fardorougha* a trial, and he wanted certain alterations made in my play. He was in comparatively poor spirits, and I noticed that one hand was bound up.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Ah, nothing," said he. "A dirty blackguard of a nail tore it."

I asked him to let me have a look at his damaged hand; after seeing it I begged him to go to a doctor. He promised me he would.

A few weeks later I was informed of his death.

SHIEL BARRY.

Sullivan told me that he had assured Shiel Barry that there was another "Gaspard" for him in "Fardorougha."

Later—in 1890—Barry wrote to me: "At one time I was in negotiation with Dion Boucicault to write a play for me with the character of "Fardorougha" introduced, but the affair fell through, and ever since I have been desirous to play the part."

I sent the MS. of my version of the story to him. He carried it about with him on tour, and after about a year he wrote: "Let me beg your forgiveness. I know full well that I do not deserve it. You have been very patient with me and I have been lazy sometimes, forgetful at other times with respect to you. Try to forgive me. I will read your piece this week."

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SHIEL BARRY
(as "Gaspard.")

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The next news I heard of Shiel Barry was that he was mortally ill.

My manuscript eventually came back to me unread, and it lies to this day in some half-forgotten corner of my manuscript cupboard.

CHARLES DUVAL.

I had a slight acquaintance with Charles DuVal when I was a mere youth. He gave an entertainment at the school I attended in my native Waterford—he could not have been more than nineteen years of age then. When next I met him he was fresh from South Africa. He had travelled through Cape Colony, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal. During his wanderings the Boer troubles of 1880 broke out, and DuVal shut up his "show" and volunteered for service. He was in Pretoria during the siege. He earned distinction as a showman and as a soldier in South Africa, and he wrote a capital account of his adventures which Tinsley Brothers published under the title of, "With a Show Through Southern Africa."

He was one of the cleverest and one of the most successful of "single-handed entertainers." He had captured four continents—

Europe, Asia, Africa and America. I do not think his wanderings extended to Australia. His happiest hunting-ground was the Emerald Isle, though I believe his most successful adventure from the commercial point of view was his last season in London, at St. James's Hall.

Charles DuVal was not Irish born, but he had Irish blood in his veins, and he married an Irish lady. He was a follower of the school of "single-handed entertainers," who had for its most distinguished professors, Valentine Vousden and Frederick McCabe. Ventriloquism, "quick change," and dancing were writ large on the programmes of these showmen. Vousden, McCabe and DuVal wrote their own songs and set them to music. DuVal relied on his powers of declamation more confidently than Vousden or McCabe. All three were extraordinarily clever "artists."

DuVal always retained much of his boyishness; his cheerful, inspiriting laugh used to ring through the dingy offices of Tinsley Brothers. I could tell many a tale of his kindliness, but perhaps such tales would lack point.

SHOWMEN AND GENTLEMEN.

The day that the news arrived about the disaster to Captain Webb at Niagara there was a small group assembled in Tinsley's office discussing the tragedy. Each member of the group had known Webb, and all were unfeignedly grieved. In the midst of some talk about the great swimmer DuVal burst into 8, Catherine Street.

"Hallo, boys," he said, in his great loud voice. "Have you heard the news about poor Webb?"

DuVal's voice somehow struck a jarring chord, and there was silence for a moment.

DuVal continued, "I suppose some of you knew him?"

"All of us here did," answered Mr. S—— (who was a bit of a wag).

"Is that so?" said DuVal. "Did he ever tell you that I gave a benefit performance for him after his Channel swim?"

"I don't think he mentioned it," said S——.

"Webb might have made money, you know," said DuVal, "if he had only got the courage to face the footlights."

"I think so," said S——. "And oddly

enough I can tell you something about that. I induced him to come with me to see Ingram of the *Illustrated London News*. Ingram said to him: 'It seems a pity, Captain Webb, that you don't make some capital out of your famous exploit. Now, what I would suggest to you is that you had a lecture written about your personal adventures as a swimmer, and that you started in London, and then went round the country delivering this lecture.'

"'I couldn't stomach it,' said Webb.

"'Why?' asked Ingram.

"'Well, I'll tell you,' said Webb. 'Swimming the Channel is one thing and going on the stage quite another thing. And my feeling is that when a man becomes a showman he ceases to be a gentleman.'"

"You wicked dog!" exclaimed DuVal, catching S—— by the shoulders. "You shouldn't have heaved that brick at me."

"On my honour," said S——, "I quite forgot that you belonged to *the* profession."

Whether he did or did not forget we couldn't tell, but we gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Later in the day I met Fred McCabe. There was no love lost between McCabe and

DuVal, the former often asseverating that the other had stolen his thunder. McCabe happened to speak to me about DuVal and I said :—

" I'll tell you rather a good one about him. He got a pretty hard knock this morning, but I must say he took it splendidly."

I then proceeded to relate to McCabe the tale, utterly forgetting for the moment McCabe's profession. When I had repeated Webb's words : " When a man becomes a showman he ceases to be a gentleman," McCabe looked daggers at me.

" Thank you very much, Mr. Downey," said he, with as much scorn as he could put into the sentence.

I remembered my experience with Sam Johnson as McCabe walked away, and I felt that it was almost useless for an Irishman to struggle against the fatal tendency to " put his foot in it."

CHAPTER X.

TINSLEYS' MAGAZINE.

HERE are some reflections and recollections concerning *Tinsleys' Magazine*. It was not in the front rank of shilling magazines, nor did it pretend to be; and it cannot be expected that my memories of it will be "first chop." I can only hope they may not prove to be dull reading.

WILLIAM CROFT.

When I was established at Catherine Street, I was introduced to William Croft. He had been connected with Tinsley Brothers from their early days. He was with Edward Tinsley at Catherine Street when the latter suddenly fell back dead in his chair.

Croft was the firm's accountant, but he was not an accountant of the regulation pattern. He had no fixed days or fixed

hours. He came and went when he pleased. The pity of it was that William Tinsley did not take William Croft into partnership when Edward Tinsley died. He was not a brilliant man, but he was well-read, he was a good judge of a book, he was an excellent accountant and a man of good general business capacity, and he had a will of his own. Moreover, he carried with him an air of "safety." You felt that nothing could go wrong, financially, when Croft was at your elbow. He was extraordinarily precise about money and money matters, and many a breeze arose between himself and William Tinsley, whose ideas about financial affairs were, in some respects, as loose as the lower half of a man-'o-war's man's trousers. With all his preciseness about money matters, there was no shadow of meanness in William Croft. He was one of those men of whom it would be impossible to write without appearing to say either too much or too little.

For many years he had edited *Tinsleys' Magazine*—that is to say, he had looked after its interests generally, whenever he could spare the time. His duties outside the office of Tinsley Brothers were multifarious. He

compiled and edited at one time no less than thirteen almanacs. I think he was assistant editor of "Whitaker's Almanac" in its early days. He invented a perpetual calendar. He was a first-rate amateur photographer. He was always on the eve of discovering a sure process of colour photography. He believed that he was the first who had discovered the value of gelatine for photographic purposes. He edited "May's Press Guide." He revised many important books in various branches of literature. He had a connection with a printing house, and for a time he managed a publishing and bookselling business. William Tinsley, in his "Recollections," says he never heard Croft laugh heartily. This is a strange statement to be made by one who knew him for more than a quarter of a century. I have met Croft innumerable times during a companionship which began in 1879 and ended with his death in 1890, and I never once met him that I did not hear his laugh. It was not a boisterous laugh, but it was a hearty laugh. He was a most genial man—perhaps a little frigid with strangers, but he was certainly far from frigid when he was amongst his friends.

Croft was not shy (any more than was William Tinsley) of telling a story against himself. Discussing small money matters with me one day, he touched upon the subject of petty squanderings. "If I make them," he said, "they always stare me reproachfully in the face, for I keep a small note-book, and every night I balance my personal petty cash account. In October, last year" (he was speaking to me at the close of 1879) "I found my account wouldn't balance. It was a halfpenny short. That halfpenny worried me more than if it was pounds, and there it remained, staring me in the face. At last, one day here, someone was speaking of Waterloo Bridge. I suddenly remembered I had crossed it on the last day it was a toll-bridge." Croft certainly laughed heartily at the remembrance of his mysteriously-spent halfpenny.

He told me a good many tales of *Tinsleys' Magazine*, but most of them have faded from my memory. He protested against the tragic conclusion—or rather against the manner of it—of "A Pair of Blue Eyes," but Thomas Hardy would not listen to him. Croft always insisted that the book was spoilt by its pessimistic ending.

He was more successful in a contest with another author—B. L. Farjeon. In looking through the proofs of the opening of one of Farjeon's novels it occurred to him that he had read some of the descriptive passages previously. Raking up his memory he discovered that the passages were taken from one of Dickens's novels—"Little Dorrit," I imagine. He pointed this out to Farjeon, and the opening of the novel had to be re-written. At that time Farjeon was steeped so deeply in Dickens that he had unconsciously transferred the Master's words to his own manuscript.

WANTED—AN EDITOR.

William Tinsley declares that his Magazine never paid—that though he had carried it on for a quarter of a century, there was nothing but a history of loss. The statement is somewhat misleading. During the five years I spent at Catherine Street, the loss on *Tinsleys' Magazine* did not exceed at any period twenty-five pounds a month, and this was recouped by profits on his Christmas and Summer Annuals. Moreover, as he frequently said to me, "What cheaper advertisement can I have for twenty-five

pounds a month? It advertises my name and publications and it keeps my authors together."

Tinsleys' Magazine was started under the editorship of Edmund Yates, who was also part proprietor. Though possibly it was conducted by him extravagantly, I always thought the extravagance was in the right direction. When Yates and Tinsley separated the Magazine might easily have been saved. But the opportunity was not seized. William Tinsley became suddenly timorous and economical about his bantling. He commenced the cutting-down process—a process which rarely fails to kill a periodical. He lopped off the illustrations, and, by degrees, he cut the standard price for contributions to such a low figure that it was well-nigh impossible to keep any life in the Magazine. The circulation, after Edmund Yates's departure, dropped slowly, steadily, and with it the income derived from advertisements (which at one time had been a considerable revenue as things went in those days). Towards the latter part of the 'Seventies, the Magazine was edited "anyhow." When I was put in charge of it, *Tinsleys'* was at its lowest ebb, and the

conditions under which it was produced during my five years at Catherine Street were too difficult to admit of the circulation being raised to its original level, or to anything approaching that level. What it required was an Editor—for choice, an Editor with a well-known name—who would have a free hand. And over and above this, it wanted some of the old courage and enterprise which had distinguished the early days of the house of Tinsley.

The one great chance—at least, so it seems to me—which William Tinsley lost, was when he did not, in 1869 or 1870, eagerly accept William Black's offer to edit the Magazine. The shilling magazine generally was falling upon evil days in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but, I believe, *Tinsleys'*, conducted by William Black, would have endured. George Augustus Sala volunteered upon one occasion to do his best to save, or to help to save, *Tinsleys'* ; but Sala was too uncertain a personage to conduct (or to help to conduct) a periodical. At any rate his promise of help—given, I have no doubt, in the best of good faith—did not go beyond the promise.

HENRY J. BYRON.

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A "MIRTH" RECEPTACLE.

Mirth—the sixpenny humorous magazine which started with great expectations under the editorship of Henry J. Byron—had died about nine months before I entered the office of Tinsley Brothers. Though its normal existence as a periodical had ceased it was still a very lively corpse. A large number of the bound volumes—*Mirth* ran exactly for a year—was sold, and the stereotype plates were subsequently lent, at a price, to an enterprising gentleman in the City, who disposed of (I was told) ten thousand copies of the volumes. By degrees, all the back numbers—of which there was a considerable stock at Catherine Street—were cleared out, the full published price of sixpence each being charged to "the trade" towards the end. *Mirth* should not have been allowed to die; but poor Byron was in bad health, and Tinsley assured me that he could not find an available and trustworthy humourist, with editorial capacity, to take Byron's chair.

In the basement of 8, Catherine Street, was a series of cellars devoted to the storage of "quire-stock"—an evil-smelling, rat-

ridden quarter, as dark and as noisome as Erebus. In the search (by candlelight) for some missing books, I came across two large, plethoric sacks. These were hoisted into the daylight. One was found to contain manuscripts (many of them in their original wrappers) which had been sent to the editor of *Mirth;* the other contained votive offerings to *Tinsleys' Magazine* (most of which bore no address of author). For many months I was occupied at odd moments in sorting these manuscripts and returning them (when they bore addresses) to the authors.

The anonymous contributions were advertised for a long period in *Tinsleys' Magazine,* but very few of them were claimed. I examined some hundreds of these manuscripts in order to discover if any of them was specially striking, but rightly or wrongly I judged them to be a very poor collection. Possibly the *Mirth* sack contained the gleanings after Byron had been over the field. I selected a few tales and put them before Mr. Tinsley. One bore no signature, but I thought it was the best of the bunch. "Put it in the Magazine if you like," he said; "the author will be sure to claim it

when it appears in print." It was a short story and the author, Mr. Frank Barrett, did recognise it, though he professed to be angry at my digging it up. He had quite forgotten that it existed. However, it was the means of introducing me personally to Frank Barrett, with whom I enjoyed for many years an intimate friendship.

EASY EDITING.

Contributors to magazines have, in the main, very little knowledge of what goes on in many a magazine office. There *are* some magazine editors who do read (or glance at) everything which reaches them, but as a general rule a magazine has a charmed circle of its own, and outside the circle the only authors who gain admittance are those who bear weighty names or who offer contributions of a specially striking or timely character.

I have heard of one mazagine, with a large circulation, which was conducted in this fashion: The editor called at the office one day in the month. He enquired if any letters or parcels addressed to him personally had arrived. If there were any he put them into his bag. "The other manuscripts can

go back as usual," he would say to a clerk; and then he would retire. He never took off his gloves in the office. It was his proud boast that he had never read a MS. addressed merely to The Editor of ——. The rejected offerings reached the authors accompanied by a printed note stating that the editor had given the most careful consideration to Mr. So and So's manuscript and he regretted very much that he was obliged to return it, with many thanks.

I think I read or glanced at almost every MS. which was addressed to the Editor of *Tinsleys' Magazine* during the five years I was in charge, and I never returned a manuscript without scribbling some sort of a note to its author.

A SHARK STORY.

In my salad days I wrote at least one note which it were better not to have written.

A bustling little man who wore a journalistic air called one day when I was very busy and asked me about a manuscript (naming its title) which he had forwarded a few weeks previously. I promised him it would be attended to as soon as

possible. At this time I had my hands full of manuscripts, old and new, the sackfuls discovered in the cellar not having been wholly disposed of. I could not lay my hands upon the manuscript for which the bustling little man had enquired. In a few days he arrived again. I explained that I had not reached his MS. yet—I did not care to admit that so far I had failed to discover it. He seemed to be greatly distressed. I asked him to give me the precise date he had posted it. He wrote it down together with the title of the MS. and then he made an appeal to me for "something on account." He was in desperate straits. I could do nothing. I could not say whether the MS. would be suitable or not and I assured him that at the moment I was inundated with proposed contributions. He was on the point of bursting into tears. Then he begged me to write him a few lines saying I would give my earliest attention to his manuscript entitled so and so, and he had no doubt he could raise a trifle on my mere promise to consider it. Partly out of pity and partly because I was very busy, I scribbled the few lines.

I happened to mention the case to Mr. Tinsley the same afternoon. "My boy," said he, "that's a plant." "How?" I asked. "Are you sure you have the fellow's manuscript?" "It is not entered," I said, "but for the past few weeks I haven't been able to keep pace with the shorter manuscripts." "It's a plant," he repeated. "I can smell it."

I felt very uncomfortable. The bustling little man began to call daily, enquiring for his property. At last I boldly faced him and declared that no such manuscript had ever reached the office. He laughed scornfully. "Why, I have your written acknowledgment of it," he said. In the end he threatened proceedings and he put the matter into the hands of a solicitor. He got some guineas by way of settlement, and then he was good enough to describe me as "a greenhorn," and to brag that it was a capitally-played trick.

I expect I derived some profit from the transaction. I was extremely anxious to be allowed to put the matter into the hands of the police. "And throw good money after bad," said Mr. Tinsley. "No, you don't, my boy. But just you bear in mind

that there are some sharks still swimming around in the Strand."

ANOTHER SHARK STORY.

Some months later I encountered a new variety of shark—or perhaps she was merely a humorist.

She was a well-known lady novelist in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties. She sent in a short story which duly appeared in the Magazine. I hadn't the slightest suspicion of her shark-like, or sophistical, qualities. About a month after the appearance of the tale a letter came from New York stating that the writer of the letter was the author of the short story, and that it had already appeared in an American periodical. I wrote to the British lady-novelist demanding an explanation. She replied airily, indeed, jauntily. Very likely the American author was right. Possibly she (the English novelist) had read the story and had unwittingly used the plot. There was such a thing as unconscious cerebration. A little later I received a copy of the American periodical and I found that practically it was the same tale, almost

word for word, as that which had appeared in *Tinsleys'*. I demanded a further explanation from the home author. She replied that she had nothing further to say. I spoke to Mr. Tinsley about it. He laughed and said I had been "done." I felt that this hardly covered the situation. How was I to know every story which had appeared in an American magazine or newspaper? The tale had been accepted mainly on the reputation of the lady novelist. Surely a trick like this should be exposed. Mr. Tinsley said it wasn't worth while exposing the lady. Moreover, she was a valuable three-volume novelist, and he couldn't afford to quarrel with her.

Some six weeks later the same lady sent in another tale, forwarding it direct to Mr. Tinsley. "You must find a place for it," said he. I had to submit. However, I wrote to the author and said I would not print the tale unless she gave me an assurance in writing that it was entirely her own work. She replied, giving the assurance I asked for. When the tale appeared in the Magazine, William Croft called and said: "I see that Mrs. Blank has sold you again." "How?" I enquired. "Her tale in this

month's number appeared under another title in the magazine some years ago."

I could hardly believe that any author with a shred of literary (or other) reputation would play such a mean trick, but Croft got hold of the volume in which it had first appeared, and there it was, word for word, barring the title. In order to be quite certain that no unforeseen or occult accident had occurred, I investigated "the copy" of the Magazine, and I found the two manuscripts. Each was in the author's own handwriting.

I wrote to the lady informing her that I would communicate with the literary papers, asking the editors to publish a statement of facts. The lady came to town. "What is wrong this time?" she asked. "Here are the two manuscripts in your own handwriting," I said. "The first case might possibly have been a case of unconscious copying, but there is no room here for any doubt. Moreover, you gave me an assurance about the second tale before I used it." "I assured you it was my work. There is evidence in your own hands that it is. What more do you want? It seems to be impossible to please you." The audacity

of the lady was sublime. I could only tell her that I would certainly let the public know what happened. "And stultify yourself!" she said. "An editor ought to know what has appeared in his own magazine."

Mr. Tinsley arrived at this stage of the proceedings. I explained matters. The lady sat and smiled. Mr. Tinsley burst into one of his guffaws. "Sold again, my boy!" he said. "You shouldn't have done it," he added, shaking his forefinger, Jaggers-like, at the lady. "You know you shouldn't." And then he indulged in another guffaw.

AN UNCLAIMED POEM.

When I was put in charge of *Tinsleys' Magazine* I found that the bulk of the "over matter" at the printers was very "washy," and I endeavoured to cancel most of it. But for reasons of economy, or friendship, or good-nature, Mr. Tinsley insisted on one thing or another being preserved. Amongst the things preserved was "a page poem" entitled "Only a Super." This was one of those pieces of verse in which it is difficult to distinguish the intended pathos from the unintended fatuity of the sentiment. It

pained me to see it in the pages of the Magazine, but there was no help for it. "It ain't so awfully bad, Downey, you know," said Mr. Tinsley. "It's by Hal Louther, and he's a decent sort. Don't look so glum over it."

There was no name attached to the poem in proof, and as I did not then know Louther, or his address, I corrected some obvious errors and put the signature "Hal Louther" at the foot of the "Super."

When the Magazine was published I had a visit from Mr. Louther. He was a small man with a curious twinkle in his eye, a quiet manner of speaking, and a habit of passing the palm of his hand down over his mouth and shaven chin.

"Mr. Downey," said he, in a tragic voice. "I understand you are editing *Tinsleys' Magazine.*"

"After a fashion," I answered.

"After a fashion, truly," said he. Then he drew his breath in between his clenched teeth. "You have had the damned impudence to attach my name to a piece of doggerel entitled 'Only a Super.' Let me tell you, sir, that I am not going to submit to your making a laughing-stock of me."

"And didn't you write it?" I asked.

"I did not, sir," said Mr. Louther.

"I am very sorry," I protested. "Mr. Tinsley assured me it was your work, and it was only because it was your work that it was allowed to appear in the Magazine."

"You will hear more about this outrage," said Mr. Louther, walking away (with a sort of "I-will-be-revenged" stride).

Later in the day someone—I fancy it was Byron Webber—called with Louther. At first I was inclined to think that it was a case of suggesting an appeal to arms, but it was a visit of good intent. My explanation of the signature to the poem was accepted, and the pseudo-author of it and I became friends.

For weeks it was the fashion to chaff Louther about his poem. Kind friends recited snatches of it when they met him, or introduced him to strangers as "the author of the famous epic, 'Only a Super.'"

At last it occurred to Louther that he ought to get some compensation for the chaff, so one day he said, "Downey, look here; that poem—you know what I mean—will go down to posterity as mine. Couldn't you let me have the half-sovereign

—or whatever you give for poems—which is due to the author ? "

I considered this a very reasonable request, but I thought I ought to mention the circumstances of the case to the proprietor of the Magazine. He guffawed when he heard of Louther's suggestion.

" Tell you what, Hal," said he, " you can have half-a-guinea for your poem if you acknowledge on paper that it *was* written by you."

" I'll be hanged if I do—even for half-a-guinea," said Louther.

" You don't expect me to pay you for what other people wrote, surely," said Tinsley, archly.

I do not remember what happened eventually, but my impression is that Louther received the half-guinea privately from the publisher.

An odd thing concerned with this " poem " was that the author of it never revealed himself, never claimed his splendid shillings.

A GIFT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Once upon a time *Tinsleys' Magazine* was anxious to get up privately a testimonial to one of its most valued contributors.

Amongst those to whom I mentioned the project was one F——, who was editing at the time a shilling magazine. F—— had at one period of his life been connected with railways and he had often spoken to me of his adventures on an Irish railway. He cordially approved of the testimonial, and as I was entering his name in a note-book as a subscriber, he said, "I hope the testimonial won't hurt him." I could see by the twinkle in F——'s eyes that he had had an experience of hurtful testimonials or that he could tell a tale of one.

"Testimonials are dangerous things," said F——. "I'll tell you about one. You remember my Irish railway. Well, when I had finished up with it the Directors decided to present me with something by which I might remember them pleasantly. They gave me a silver tea-service—a very handsome set. When it reached my London home my wife naturally was anxious that our friends should behold the tea-service, so she asked me if she might give a party in honour of it. I said, all right. Next thing was, she wanted, naturally again, a new dress to go hand-in-hand with the tea-service. I said, all right. Next thing

was, our furniture looked a bit shabby in the light of the tea-set. To cut a long story short, that testimonial nearly ruined me, for, in the end, I had to take a new and a larger house and furnish it up to the level of the tea-service."

A STORY OF A COINCIDENCE.

I have heard many strange stories of coincidences. After relating his experience with the tea-service, F—— told me a tale which is worth recounting. His father had been an officer in the N—th Regiment, and F——'s earliest recollection—a faint one—was of embarking at Haulbowline, in Cork harbour, for the Bermudas. While he was in Ireland on railway business, he determined to visit Queenstown. He experienced a strong desire to see Cork harbour once again—he had not been in Ireland since the time he had set out from Haulbowline. At Queenstown he stood on the high ground which commands a view of Cork harbour. The scene was hopelessly unfamiliar and he was about to move away, bitterly disappointed at being unable to recall the surroundings. Suddenly, he heard the distant strains of a military band. The

band was playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me." The sound of the music thrilled him, and as he gazed out to sea he felt as if a fog had lifted—the memory of his early exodus from Ireland and of the scene of it became fixed and clear. In the distance he could see Haulbowline and the troops in motion and the troopship swaying in the harbour. A man was standing close to him, also gazing in the direction of the ship. He enquired, "Do you know what band is playing?" and the answer he got was, "It's the N—th, sir. The regiment is embarking over there beyond for Bermuda."

A SELF-RESTORING UMBRELLA.

I told the tale to another friend of mine —also an editor. "I am not able to cap F——'s story from personal experience," he said, "but I can tell you of a remarkable coincidence concerning a lost umbrella. You remember the ivory-handled one which a kind Christian friend presented to me. One morning I arrived in my office and found I was *minus* the umbrella. I taxed my memory about it. I had taken it with me in the morning and had placed it on the

overhead shelf in the railway carriage. I notified the loss to the railway company, and then the umbrella once more vanished from my memory. The same afternoon I lunched at a restaurant, and when I got into the hall after luncheon I saw that it had commenced to rain. Quite forgetting that I had lost my umbrella I went to the umbrella stand—unconscious cerebration, of course—and the first thing my hand touched was the umbrella I had left in the train. There was no mistake about it; my name was engraved upon it."

JESTS WITH AN AUTHOR.

On one occasion Richard Dowling was chatting with his publisher about the Magazine and about its Christmas Number. Dowling had written two of these Christmas Numbers in succession, and it was in the balance whether or no he was to write a third.

"I suppose, Tinsley," said Dowling, "it makes precious little difference to you who writes your Christmas Number. It sells, not as a story by so-and-so, but merely as *Tinsleys' Annual.*

"That's so, Dick, my boy," said Tinsley.

"For how many years," asked Dowling, jocosely, "do you think you could continue to print the merest rubbish as *Tinsleys' Annual* without being hurt?"

"I hardly know, Dick," said he. "You've tried hard for two years. Best have a third shot and see if you can kill it."

On another occasion, when one of these Christmas tales by Dowling had sold very well, Tinsley thought he might be pardoned for "taking a rise" out of the author. He introduced him to a stranger at the "Gaiety" and then whispered to Dowling, "Dick, my boy, do your best to make yourself agreeable to our friend. He is the largest buyer of those Christmas stories of yours. I must be off."

Dowling spoke for a while on general topics to the stranger and at last he ventured upon the subject of books.

"I suppose you know," he said, "that I am the unfortunate man who wrote Tinsley's last Annual?"

"Yes. I recognised your name, Mr. Dowling," said the stranger.

"Mr. Tinsley tells me you are a large buyer of books," said Dowling.

"Yes, I buy a lot of stuff of one kind or another. I'm a waste-paper merchant."

I may add that it was Richard Dowling who told me these tales.

A CALCULATING CONTRIBUTOR.

The proprietor of *Tinsleys' Magazine* was not an adept at stiff mathematical problems. A writer called upon him one day and asked him for a cheque for a Magazine contribution. At this period "the scale" was in a very wobbly condition. It was generally supposed to be seven and sixpence a page, but when the proprietor gave the honorarium directly to the contributor, he had a habit of gauging values by a scale of his own. He held no exalted opinion of the author to whom he gave the cheque, and he paid him according to his private valuation of the work.

The receipt came by post. Mr. Tinsley handed me the contributor's letter asking if I could inform him "what on earth the fellow meant," and what was the true inwardness of the extraordinary figures. The receipt was couched in the ordinary terms, but added were the words (written, no doubt, in vitriol) — "being at the rate of 6/2·875676', or thereabouts, per page."

I considered the "or thereabouts" to be the best part of the joke, but I could not succeed in making Mr. Tinsley see the fun even of the recurring decimal.

ZOLA PURIFIED.

At a time when the translations of "L'Assommoir" and "Nana" (published by Mr. Henry Vizetelly) were fluttering British dovecotes, a proposal to run "Le Bonheur des Dames" under the title of "The Ladies' Paradise" reached *Tinsleys' Magazine.* I read the translation and I could not see anything especially objectionable, from the moral point of view, in the story; but Mr. Tinsley's argument was, that whether the story was good or bad, decorous or indecorous, it would ill become a magazine intended for household consumption to introduce Zola to its readers. He was willing to publish the novel as a book, if I was confident it would not give offence. So Tinsley Brothers arranged with M. Zola to issue "The Ladies' Paradise" in three-volume form. I read and revised the proofs in order that the head of the house of Tinsley might be assured there would be nothing objectionable issued with his im-

print. When I had completed the revision I was satisfied that the "Ladies' Paradise" was safe—that no one who was not hopelessly prudish could object to it.

It was arranged that it should be "subscribed" on a certain Monday morning. On the previous Saturday Mr. Tinsley took a copy home with him. On Monday he handed it to me and said, "This will never do." He pointed out various passages to which he objected. I argued that anyone who would find fault on moral grounds with the passages he indicated, would find fault with "Adam Bede" or "David Copperfield." But arguments of this kind were of no avail.

The book was subjected to an additional process of purification; and when "The Ladies' Paradise" in its highly-clarified form was subscribed, most of the Circulating Libraries held up their hands, and the English version, in three volumes, of "Le Bonheur des Dames," brought no profit either to Zola or to Tinsley Brothers.

A SIXPENNY TINSLEYS'.

I had frequently besought Mr. Tinsley either to kill his Magazine or to make a

bold dash with it, but he could not be moved. During my last year with him I succeeded in inducing him to consider the advisability of reducing the price to sixpence, of making the Magazine more up-to-date and of illustrating it. At that time process-engraving was only in its infancy, and though wood-engraving was moribund, it had not been squeezed out of existence by the cheap photographic processes. Mr. Tinsley at length caved in when he saw The *Cornhill* announced as an illustrated sixpenny, and told me I could "fire ahead." But he grew nervous at the last moment and spoilt the chances of the experiment. Illustrations would run into too much money, he declared, and contributions of the class I was arranging would be too costly.

He had announced the coming change of price, and he felt he could not stultify himself; and, somewhat unwillingly he allowed the Magazine to appear as a sixpenny publication. But there was no hope for it as a sixpenny on its old lines, and, after running it for six months he put back the hands of the clock again by reverting to the shilling. Of course, this was practically a death-blow to *Tinsleys'*. A few years after I left

Catherine Street he revived his magazine, calling it *Tinsley's Miscellany*, and issuing it at sixpence; but I am afraid the experiment did not pay.

A TINSLEY GALAXY.

I can recall some of the contributors to *Tinsleys'* whose fame acquired strength as it advanced. Mr. Hall Caine, who brought to the office an article on Rossetti; a fragile, earnest-looking, but somewhat timorous young man. Mr. George Moore, fresh from France—redolent of Zola, the Goncourts and Flaubert: his first magazine story—a short tale entitled "Under the Fan"—found a place in the generous bosom of *Tinsleys'*. Witty, high-spirited, charming Mrs. Hungerford, flushed with the success of her first novels, "Molly Bawn" and "Airy Fairy Lilian"—a success which (she assured me) had caused Mr. James Payn some agonizing moments. Mrs. Croker, who submitted her brilliant first novel, "Proper Pride"—my memory tells me that her own title was "After Long Years"—as a *Tinsley* serial, and whose patience in waiting for a reply gives her high rank amongst the literary Griseldas. Edward A. Morton, who was a

regular Tinsleyite and who is now best known to fame as a sane dramatic critic and as the author of "San Toy." William Westall, whose first novel "The Old Factory," secured for him an enduring place as a delineator of life in his native Lancashire. Fitzgerald Molloy, whose first novel, "Merely Players" appeared as a serial in the Magazine. Miss Mabel Collins, who was giving early proof of inherited genius. Tighe Hopkins, whose first short story, published in *Tinsleys'* marked him out as a genial and genuine humorist. Aaron Watson, who, some years ago covered me with confusion, at a dinner given to him by editorial London, by referring to me as his "first Magazine Editor."

Percy Fitzgerald, John Augustus O'Shea, George Henty, B. L. Farjeon, Henry S. Leigh, Byron Webber, Annie Thomas, and my kinsman and best friend, Richard Dowling, were writers with reputations rooted in the soil when I had the privilege of "editing" their work.

CHAPTER XI.

MY SPARE MOMENTS.

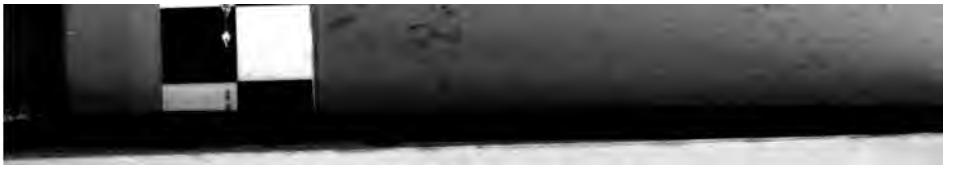
In his "Confessions of a Young Man," Mr. George Moore (in the course of a lively and humorous description of the office of Tinsley Brothers) declares that I edited *Tinsleys' Magazine*, read the manuscripts, looked after the printer and binder, and entertained the visitors, and kept the accounts when I had "a spare moment." I did *not* keep the accounts. Most of my spare moments at this period were occupied, under whatever roofs I may have slept, with literary—I cannot find a less pretentious adjective—pursuits. When I wasn't reading I was writing. I cannot remember to have indulged in any reading or writing on my own account in the Tinsley office, my duties absorbing my time up to six or seven o'clock. In fact, I led a double life.

ALF. BRYAN.

The first London newspaper office to which I was introduced (by Richard Dowling) was that of *The Hornet*, in Fleet Street.

The Hornet was started by Stephen Fiske, and it was one of the most successful of the satirical papers published during its lifetime. When I made the acquaintance of the paper, whose motto was: "If I be waspish, best beware," the editor and part proprietor was Major Featherstonehaugh, and its regular contributors were Tom Purnell, Richard Dowling, Major Ashe and Percy Lindley. J. A. O'Shea, William McKay and Robert Reece were occasional contributors at this period.

The principal artist attached to the staff was Alfred Bryan, then a very young man. Bryan had a marvellous knack of catching a likeness, but he had little or no ambition. He was a thorough Bohemian—a good-humoured, good-natured man, hopelessly irresponsible, but true as steel to his friends or to his promises. In these days he was modest almost to an absurdity about his work. Richard Dowling used to try to instil ambition into him, but Bryan was imper-



ALFRED BRYAN "AT HOME."

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vious to praise or to blame, to flattery or to sneers. "What do you mean by wasting your time in Fleet Street?" said Dowling to him one day in the *Hornet* office. "Why don't you go West and set up as a portrait painter?" "I couldn't stomach the dirty work, Dowling," said Bryan. "What dirty work?" "Oh, the backstairs business—the bowing and the scraping to aristocratic noodles or their parasites—the general snobbery of the whole thing. There is the Academy, too, to be reckoned with; and I have made up my mind to live just as I please and to draw just as I please." "You'll never be a millionaire," said Dowling. "Devil may care! I'll be something better —a free man."

One of Bryan's engagements at this period —a short and strictly private engagement— was to draw outline portraits of celebrities for "a lightning artist," who was displaying his powers at a show in the St. James's or the Egyptian Hall. The lightning artist used to produce *coram publico* (by some process of rubbing out or washing out) excellent portraits which Bryan beforehand had carefully sketched.

In these days his best work was his

Entr'acte cartoon. The editor of the *Entr'acte*, Mr. W. H. Combes, was Bryan's first patron and best friend, and for twenty years A. B. rarely missed his weekly show in "the merry little organ." Occasionally, for some reason or other, "a person of the drama" would decline to give proper facilities to the *Entr'acte* artist for making a portrait sketch, but this did not daunt Combes or Bryan. The popular box-office manager of the Lyceum—"Joe" Hurst—declined, with emphasis, to allow his counterfeit presentment to appear in the *Entr'acte*. In those archaic days there were no kodaks, and if a man declined to stand still for a camera operator, or to give an artist a sitting, it was not easy to reproduce his features in ink. Joe Hurst's refusal was only a spur to Combes. Bryan did not know Hurst, nor did Hurst know Bryan. One day the editor of the *Entr'acte* went to the Lyceum to enquire about seats. At his elbow was a friend. The friend succeeded in getting a glimpse of Hurst through the box-office hole. It was only a glimpse, but it sufficed. He drew a marvellously characteristic portrait, which duly appeared in *The Entr'acte*. Joe Hurst would not believe that the only sight Bryan had of him was the

peep at the box-office. Many of Bryan's best portraits were made with as little "study."

FUNNY FOLKS.

I had established a connection—of a very mild character—with *Funny Folks* before I met William Tinsley. *Funny Folks* was then an illustrated weekly periodical, published at a penny—a large eight-page sheet with a political cartoon on its front page. Its sub-title was, "the Comic Companion to the Newspapers," and it endeavoured to live up to this title. For more than a twelvemonth I was a regular contributor to *Funny Folks* —everything from "poetry" to one-line jokes. I found it very serious and very painful work occasionally. The editor was the brilliant W. K. Sawyer. *Funny Folks* was a good property in Sawyer's days, and I understood that its prosperity remained when Sawyer's mantle fell upon Mr. Charles Pearce. But all the penny "comics" which flourished in the 'Seventies began to droop in the 'Eighties. *Tit-Bits*, *Scraps*, and all the various other newer forms of popular pennyworths swept the field. The grey rat exterminated the black rat.

Mr. Aglen A. Dowty, who, as O. P. Q. Philander Smiff, had been the humorous backbone of the *Figaro*, was the most brilliant of *Funny Folks'* contributors. It was (and doubtless it remains) the custom of Red Lion House*—the headquarters of *Funny Folks*—to pay their contributors unfailingly every Friday. One Friday afternoon when I called for my modest honorarium, I was astonished at being handed about three times the amount I expected to receive. On examining the contributors' copy of the paper, I found that the money tendered to me was Mr. Dowty's. The cashier smiled as I exchanged the greater sum for the lesser. "Your name and Mr. Dowty's look somewhat alike," said he. "Do you know Dowty?" "Only by reputation," I answered.

The same day I met my mentor, Richard Dowling. I told him the tale of my adven-

* The Red Lion House system of payment is impressed upon me because it was in such violent contrast to other systems. The custom on one paper to which I contributed at the time I was "joking wi' deefeculty" for *Funny Folks* was to accost the Editor whenever you chanced to meet him, and to inquire if he could spare you a copper. Sometimes he responded with silver, and if he was in funds he might hand you a half-sovereign "on account." There were periodicals of higher standing who had rules about paying on the second Thursday after the third Saturday or the third Friday after the second Monday, or some other combination of dates which could be worked out only by an actuary or an almanack-maker. Sometimes it meant Tibb's Eve.

ture with the cashier, and I added that I had been puzzled what to say when he asked me, "Do you know Dowty?" It occurred to me at the time that there was a *Funny-Folkish* reply, and that the occasion demanded it. "I am ashamed of you," said Richard Dowling. "The idea of being at a loss for a comic reply in the home of a comic paper! I have half a mind to write to Sawyer and inform him that he is harbouring a disgusting impostor. Of course, the retort is an obvious one; it would have made the cashier smile or go mad. When you were asked, 'Do you know Dowty?' your correct reply, as a contributor to *Funny Folks*, was: 'No; but no doubt he—Dowty—would want to know me if you put down his—Downey's—money before him.'"

REVIEWING.

A great change has taken place during the last twenty years in the matter of reviewing books. In the early 'Eighties the daily papers considered they were fairly generous if they devoted a column or two in the week to notices of current literature. "Reviewing" (as a branch of journalism) used to be almost the last infirmity of noble mind.

(I am not, of course, referring to the professedly literary periodicals, weekly, monthly or quarterly.) When one considers that a man has to—or ought to—read a book; that he may be a slow reader; that he may have some glimmer of conscience, or of intellect; and that his opinion (when he does express it in print) is regarded as a pronouncement worthy of respectful consideration, the prices which used to be paid for "reviewing" were in many instances—to put it mildly—discouraging.

Now it is the pleasant custom of the daily press, London and provincial, to devote almost as much space to Literature as to "Law and Police Intelligence." I think I am correct in saying that it was Mr. T. P. O'Connor who was the first to make "a feature" in a daily or weekly newspaper of book notices; he remains *facile princeps* in this walk of journalism. I am fairly confident it was owing to his successful treatment of "reviewing" that the daily newspaper of to-day found its best interests are served by devoting considerable space to current literature. For this he deserves the thanks of authors, journalists, publishers and readers alike.

In 1881 I contributed numerous notices of books to a London daily paper. I had no idea of the scale of payment when I undertook the work. I did not seek for payment until I had furnished a considerable amount of work to the paper—possibly I had read (or skimmed) about eighty books. When I sought for my fee I was sent to the cashier. "How much space do you make it?" said he. "Thirteen columns and three-quarters." "Oh, let us call it fourteen columns." I thought he was an extremely, indeed, an absurdly generous man, and I gazed at him with a mixture of affection and wonderment. He handed me seven guineas. "What is this?" I asked. "Your money," said he; "fourteen columns at ten-and-sixpence a column" (the column contained about eighteen hundred words). "That's our scale."

This happened twenty-three years ago. I never sought for any reviewing since—I have done very little—without making a preliminary enquiry about "scales." (I expect if I were contributing to *Funny Folks* I could not have resisted the temptation to say something about the scales falling from my eyes—but one must be serious, occasionally.)

MY DIARY.

DR. EDMUND O'LEARY.

In 1882 I made an attempt—my only attempt—to keep a diary. The entries are, I find, concerned principally with two men and two days—Doctor Edmund O'Leary and Mr. Edmondston, and the 6th and 7th September, 1882. There is nothing of special note in the entries, but as they are the only two notes made by me of events while I was at Catherine Street, I am quoting them exactly as I wrote them two-and-twenty years ago (except for the alteration of a surname).

"6th September, 1882.

"Dined at Gaiety with Dr. O'Leary. Went to smoking-room afterwards. O'L. wanted to see me about a MS. of Denis Dowling Mulcahy (now in Jersey City), showing that Froude quotes Giraldus Cambriensis as a reputable authority. D.D.M. shows that G.C. is utterly untrustworthy. Suggested he should try *Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly*, or *Contemporary*.

"Talking of various Irishmen of note, we came to The O'Blank. O'Leary said he remembered once when O'B. was in digs. calling upon him. He was engaged writing the histories of various prize-fighters for the *L. V. Gazette*. O'L. found O'B. at a loss for something. 'I find,' said he, 'a certain prizefighter' (Burke, I think, was the name) 'died some fifty years ago. I can't discover anything about him. Most like, judging by his name, he was a Galway man. Do you know any Galway story that would fit a prizefighter?' O'L. remembered the story of a certain miller—Power was his name—who also owned a bit of land, and was one of 'the ould stock.' Riding one day down the main street an officer who was standing on the steps of a hotel, or club-house, said to a brother officer: 'What a shame to see that cad of a miller riding such a fine beast!' The remark was reported to Power, who said he thought he had best take no notice, as he had his mother's and his sister's welfare at heart, and he was the only man in the family. It would be wrong on his part to place his life in danger; and, after all, the officer who made the remark never intended that it should reach his (the miller's) ears.

"A day or two afterwards the mother of the miller heard of the affair, and went to her son, saying, she would never open her lips to him again if he did not avenge the insult. The son dutifully went and challenged the officer, who refused to fight. His refusal got wind and none of his brother officers would have anything to say to him. He was obliged to exchange into a regiment ordered abroad. But the news of his conduct had reached Gib. before his arrival there, and at Gib. he was "sent to Coventry." In the end he was obliged to sell out. He came back to Galway and there he fought Power, who shot him dead.

"O'B. said the story would suit capitally. So he made his prizefighter a son of the miller who was (he stated) obliged to fly from Galway, to change his name and seek refuge in London, where he brought up in poverty an only son, to whom at his death he was unable to leave any heritage save one of dauntless bravery.

Edmund O'Leary was a half brother of John O'Leary, the Fenian chieftain—*ultimus Romanorum*. Edmund had a surgery in Fetter Lane, a place of drudgery and small

fees. He and I easily fraternized, for we found we had each of us, at different periods —the doctor was some years older than I— got a " taste " of our education at St. John's College, Waterford. Many a call I made at Dr. O'Leary's place in Fetter Lane—a cheerless place at best—after my day's work at Catherine Street was done. Occasionally the doctor would call at Catherine Street—he was fond of books and bookmen, and he was a scholar without being a pedant. His manner was remarkably gentle, but there was in his eyes at times a light which showed that he was no stranger to enthusiasm.

A bumptious man from Fleet Street was one day enlarging upon prison discipline. In the course of his enlargements he touched upon the treatment of Irish political prisoners. The journalist, an Englishman, was aware that two of his listeners were Irishmen, but this knowledge did not prevent him from saying many things which might reasonably be calculated to be offensive to the average Hibernian. He went on to describe Portland prison, and presently Doctor O'Leary corrected gently some error in the " facts " of the omniscient journalist. The journalist angrily objected to being corrected. He

knew he was right. O'Leary repeated that the journalist was wrong—in fact, that he showed a general lack of knowledge of the subject upon which he was expatiating. "Perhaps you have some inside knowledge of Portland prison," said the journalist angrily, or jocularly, or offensively. "I have," said the doctor. "A compulsory knowledge?" said the journalist, smiling. "My brother was a convict there," said O'Leary. (I think I was the only one of the group who was aware who "the convict" was.)

It was amusing to watch the startled faces of the men when they learned that they had been hobnobbing with one who obviously was proud of being the brother of a felon.

One Saturday I found myself alongside Doctor O'Leary on the top of a 'bus bound for the City. Our meeting was quite accidental. He spoke somewhat gloomily of his life in Fetter Lane, and I pressed him to consider the abandonment of it—to transfer himself to more lucrative and more comfortable quarters. I lived at this period at Herne Hill, and I told O'Leary that there was a doctor's house to be let on the Dulwich Road, and that the goodwill of the practice could

be acquired for a moderate sum. He seemed to think favourably of the change I proposed. "I can't go out to Dulwich to-day," said he. "What about to-morrow?" "Nor to-morrow," he replied; "but I promise you to go out to you to-morrow week if I am alive."

We parted at Ludgate Circus. Edmund O'Leary was not alive on the Sunday he was to have spent with me. His sudden death gave all of us who knew him a horrible shock.*

DEAN RAMSEY'S RECOLLECTIONS.

The second (and concluding) entry in my abortive diary is concerned with Mr. Edmonston, who was at one time the head of the publishing house of Edmonston and Douglas, of Edinburgh. The entry runs:—

* Mr. Tinsley in his "Random Recollections" makes a reference to the funeral of Doctor O'Leary, and describes it as "a miserable failure" from the "show or demonstration" point of view.

The truth of the matter was that Mr. Tinsley, who had a great admiration for Doctor O'Leary, asked me if there would be any objection to his attending the funeral. I did not see why there should be any objection, and we drove together to Kensal Green. The funeral was, by desire of O'Leary's relatives, of a strictly private character. There was not the slightest intention of making "a show or a demonstration" of it. I pointed this curious blunder out to Mr. Tinsley when he showed me the proofs of his book, but he persisted in sticking to his theory that "the funeral was a failure."

"Sept. 7th, 1882.

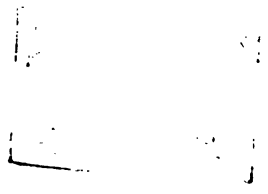
"Talking to Edmonston to-day, he told me that 'Dean Ramsay's Recollections' was the outcome of a successful lecture delivered by the Dean. The lecture was put into book form, and the book was published at a cheap price by Edmonston's firm. Shortly before the author died they purchased the remainder of the copyright for £100. The Dean received altogether about £800 from the book. E.'s firm sold their copyright subsequently for £300.

"E. also showed me a letter from one of the Macmillans, thanking him for suggesting the title of their then projected magazine—*Macmillan's Magazine*."

Mr. Edmonston had retired from business when I knew him. He lived in the same road in which I lived—a turning off the Dulwich Road. Occasionally on Sunday we walked together through the fields from Herne Hill Station to Lordship Lane. A good deal of the green way through which we used to plod is now sown over with bricks and mortar.

AN ANECDOTE OF "THE ALBION."

"The Albion Tavern" in Russell Street,



JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA.

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Covent Garden, bore a relationship to Bohemia-in-the-Strand somewhat similar to the bond which still exists between Bohemia-in-Fleet-Street and "The Cheshire Cheese." Its proximity to Drury Lane and Covent Garden gave to the Albion a distinctly theatrical flavour, but it used to be a *rendez-vous* for men of ink as well as for their brethren of the buskin or the sock. In the 'Sixties it was a favourite lunching haunt of Charles Dickens.

I used to hear many tales of the Albion from William Tinsley, but they were concerned with theatrical folk, and I did not at the time take sufficient interest in "the profession" to bear in mind tales of the players.

I remember a visit I paid to the old tavern one evening in the lively company of John Augustus O'Shea. O'Shea led the way to a semi-private apartment upstairs.

"I haven't been here for an age," said he. "This is a room sacred to certain guests who are supposed to know the ways of the house. Last time I was in this room it was with poor Webb. It was a raw rainy day, and we came in here principally to have a taste of a fire. A fine fire blazed in the grate, but it was monopolized by a little hard-

featured, yellow-skinned curmudgeon, who stood on the hearthrug with his back to the fire. He glared at Webb and myself as if it was a piece of impertinence on our part to enter the room. I took the weight of this gentleman pretty accurately. I judged him to be a retired Indian officer, most likely one of the commissariat or civil order.

"Webb and I looked at each other, and we drew a chair to each side of the hearth and talked to one another right across the ill-mannered little beggar. I started a tirade against flogging in the army—Parnell had just introduced the topic to the House of Commons. I spoke of my personal experiences in India of flogging, addressing Webb occasionally as 'Captain.' I declared I had never permitted a man in any regiment I commanded to be flogged. It was a mean, dirty, cowardly business. Webb fell in easily with the flogging talk, and he addressed me as 'General.' *

* O'Shea was the soundest authority in Fleet Street on military affairs. They were one of his special hobbies. He was known to a certain group of his journalistic friends as "The General" (or "The Gineral"). The sobriquet originated in a joke played by Reginald Shirley Brooks. In describing a swell military function for the *Morning Post*, Brooks gave a list of the most distinguished guests. Amongst these he placed "General John Augustus O'Shea, of the U.S. army."

"The little man who was monopolising the fire began to grow visibly uneasy. At last he could not restrain himself, and he demanded with some fierceness and with a good deal of impudence, 'who were we?' 'It is obvious to me that you are not military men,' said he, 'and your views upon this flogging question are simply monstrous.' Then he and I went at it hammer-and-tongs, and I think I gave him as good a roasting as any fire could give him. Webb and I left him almost foaming at the mouth.

"After we were clear of the room—as I learned later—the little gentleman—he was a retired Indian officer (as I had guessed)—pulled the bell and ordered the head waiter to be sent to him. 'Who were those infernal scoundrels?' he demanded. 'Those two fellows who have just left the room?' 'One of them, sir,' said the waiter, 'was connected with the siege of Paris. He was the first gentleman who sent out messages from Paris by carrier pigeon.'* The Indian officer puffed and blew and his face grew livid with rage. 'The other gentleman,' continued the

* O'Shea had been locked up in Paris for five months during the great siege, and he had sent messages to the *Standard* from the besieged town by carrier pigeon.

waiter, casually, 'is just after swimming across the Straits of Dover.'

"The little man screamed with passion: 'I thought,' he cried, 'that they were the two greatest liars in London; but,' glaring at the waiter, 'you're the biggest liar on earth.'"

THE LADIES' PICTORIAL.

My good friend Somerville Gibney told me one day that there was a mantua-maker in Queen Victoria Street who was purchasing short stories for the purpose of printing them in a kind of superior trade catalogue. This did not seem very alluring, but as my friend Gibney intended to supply the trade organ with poetry, I felt I could not complain if I was allowed to contribute prose to the same publication. I called at the mantua-maker's establishment, and I saw a Mr. Gibbons, one of the partners. He told me he had an idea of seeking later for a public field for his enterprise—a monthly—outside "the soft goods trade." So far he had consulted only two journalists—Somerville Gibney and A. H. Wall (another friend of mine as it happened). Wall was of opinion that there *was* a public field for a costume paper. I asked Mr.

Gibbons: "What about artists?" He said his idea was to buy up old wood blocks—in fact, he had already purchased a quantity of these; and everything—fashion articles, stories, poems and general literature was to be written up to these blocks. I had heard of this kind of thing, but I had no previous experience of it. Mr. Gibbons said he would be glad to buy short stories from me if I agreed to write them to his purchased blocks. (Of course, I did not fail to think of Crummles and the tub.) Of these blocks he possessed no finished printings; he had merely flat pulls. And these conveyed about as much impression to me as would a so-called "impressionist" sketch. He told me I could select any drawing, of a certain size, which pleased me. I glanced through the portfolio of flat pulls, and picked out a sketch which represented a crowd standing close to the mouth of a pit, one of the members of the crowd standing on the pit-brow holding up a lantern.

A few years previously I had explored a good deal of the Rhondda Valley; I had visited the bowels of the earth and had witnessed coal-mining operations a thousand feet underground. I was in Cardiff when the

terrible and famous accident had occurred in the Rhondda Valley—when a sudden inrush of water from a disused pit had entombed some colliers. I had seen the crowds —mostly women—who perambulated the streets of Cardiff singing and praying—kneeling in the streets as they prayed for the restoration of the entombed men. The whole excitement of those thrilling days came back to me as I stared at the flat pull. I felt I could write spiritedly about a colliery disaster. Anyhow, I set to work and turned out a short story. When the printers got hold of the block it was discovered that the scene was at the end of a pier, which shoved its nose into the raging waters, and that the man holding up the lamp at the pit's mouth was a lighthouse. So I had to write hurriedly a tale of a shipwreck. (I never ascertained what became of my colliery story. There was no block to fit it.) I wrote about half-a-dozen tales " up to blocks," and by the time they saw the light Mr. Gibbons had made up his mind definitely for the plunge, and the " Trade Catalogue " became the *Ladies' Pictorial*—a threepenny monthly periodical. I did a good deal of work for the publication in its new form, when its office was in a narrow

building in the Strand, opposite St. Mary's Church, Mr. A. H. Wall its editor. I wrote a series of biographies of lady novelists, pen sketches of other famous women, and some articles on needlework (of which science I knew nothing on earth). I must have written "poetry" for it, but I forget. (I expect my verses would be even worse than my needlework contributions.)

By the time the periodical was retitled and called the *Lady's Pictorial* (published at sixpence), my connection with it had ceased.

SUNDRY PERIODICALS.

A list of the periodicals to which I contributed during my five years in the Strand would, I fear, be interesting only to myself, but I may mention some forlorn hopes of the early 'Eighties.

The *Pen*, a literary and critical paper, edited by Wilfred Meynell and published in Henrietta Street. The *Roundabout*, an illustrated "knockabout," published by the Dalziels, and edited by my friend, Mr. Arthur T. Pask. *Walter Pelham's Journal*, also an illustrated weekly of the *olla podrida* type, with a leaning in favour of the theatrical

world. It was edited by Mr. William George Larkins. The *Fool:* I wrote a good deal for the first number of this paper, but I cannot remember that I ever saw a copy of the *Fool*—it died on its third or fourth number—nor can I recollect who edited it or who published it. The *Society Times*, a weekly devoted to fiction, society paragraphs and poetry. Mr. James Willing, junior, supplied some very clever verses to this paper. It was edited by Captain L'Estrange. I fancy there was no capital behind it. The *Squire:* This was a magazine intended mainly for the country house. It was started and edited by Morgan Evans. I am afraid there was no field for this magazine, but a weekly periodical conducted on its lines might have succeeded. *Time:* a shilling monthly, of the then regulation pattern, which was launched by Edmund Yates about 1880. Yates sold it to Kelly & Co., who conducted it ably for a considerable time; but the shilling magazine—considered collectively or particularly—was in such a ricketty condition that nothing short of an anointed genius could have saved *Time*. Kelly and Co. sold the magazine to a poet and to a story-teller—B. Montgomerie Ranking and Henry Scott Vince, who edited

and published it next door to the office of *Tinsleys' Magazine.*

B. M. RANKING AND H. S. VINCE.

Vince arrived in the Strand armed with a colonial reputation, and in the course of time he became a recognised authority (in his own circle) upon Australian affairs. He used to tell that he had been born in "the back blocks" of Queensland, and that his earliest recollection was of hiding up a tree with his mother while the Blacks were setting fire to the Vince "location." Many a yarn he spun of his personal adventures in Australian goldfields. It was discovered eventually that Vince had never once been out of England. I remember being present at the principal "unmasking" of poor Vince. I published a substantial fiction of his a few years later in three volumes—"As Avon Flows."

Ranking was a poet and a dreamer. He claimed to be a Highlander, but it was the fashion in our Bohemia to deny his claim to Scottish birth. Dear, humorous Matt Stretch (who is, I am glad to say, still busy with his pencil) used to insist that Ranking was a native of Tunbridge Wells. Ranking was a

pronounced—indeed almost an aggressive Jacobite. He always drank "the King—over the water." He was a "resting" barrister. I asked him once why he did not endeavour to make an appearance at the Bar. "I couldn't stand the smell of the beastly courts," was his reply. (This was in pre-New Courts of Justice days.)

Ranking and Vince died towards the close of the 'Eighties.

Amongst the papers of this period which succeeded in surviving, in spite of my connection with them, were — *The Weekly Dispatch* (to which I contributed about twenty short stories); *The Echo*, under Aaron Watson; and *The Sporting and Dramatic News* and *Life*, when these two sixpennies were in the able hands of Byron Webber.

MY FIRST BOOK.

Perhaps I may fittingly conclude these disjointed recollections of my chequered life at No. 8, Catherine Street, with an account of the genesis of my first book.

Twenty-two books bearing my name as author have been published since 1883.

The first of these was by no means the least successful of my small ventures into authorship. It is called "Anchor-Watch Yarns," and it was published by Tinsley Brothers in two volumes (price one guinea). It is dedicated "To William Tinsley."

My chief said to me unexpectedly: "You have written a lot of short stories about the sea—haven't you?" I answered, "Yes." "Put them together and see what they'll make." I did as I was desired, and when I had put my tales into shape, hoping that they might be fashioned into a modest volume, Mr. Tinsley said: "Send the stuff on to the Crystal Palace Press, and tell them to cast it off for two volumes." I mildly protested. What chance, I asked, could a book of the kind have if it was issued in such a pretentious form? "It's either two volumes or nothing," said my patron. "Take your choice, my boy."

And thus was two-volume greatness thrust upon me.

THE END.

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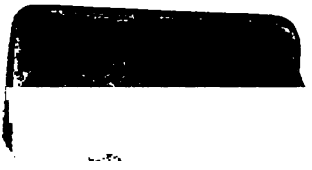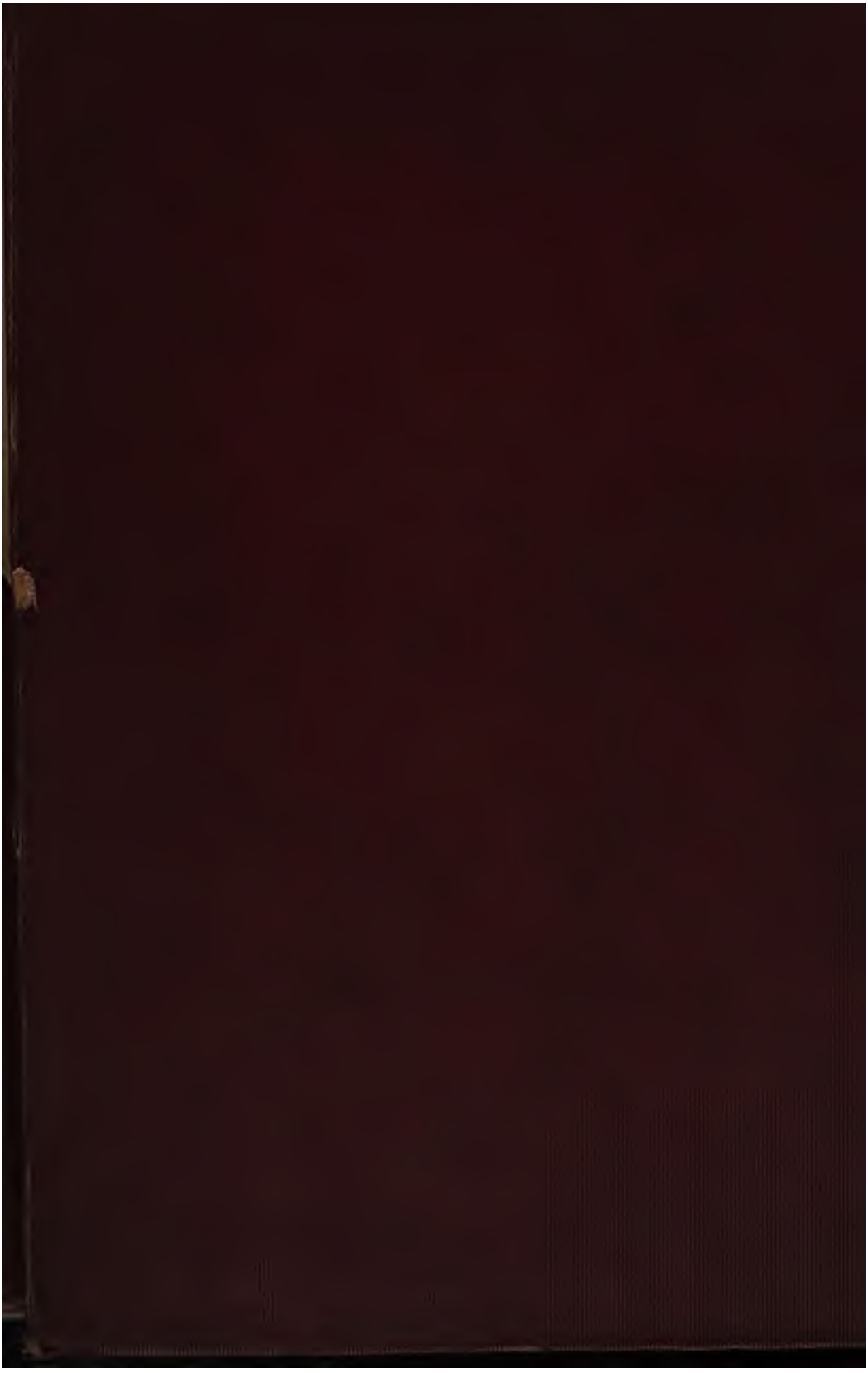
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